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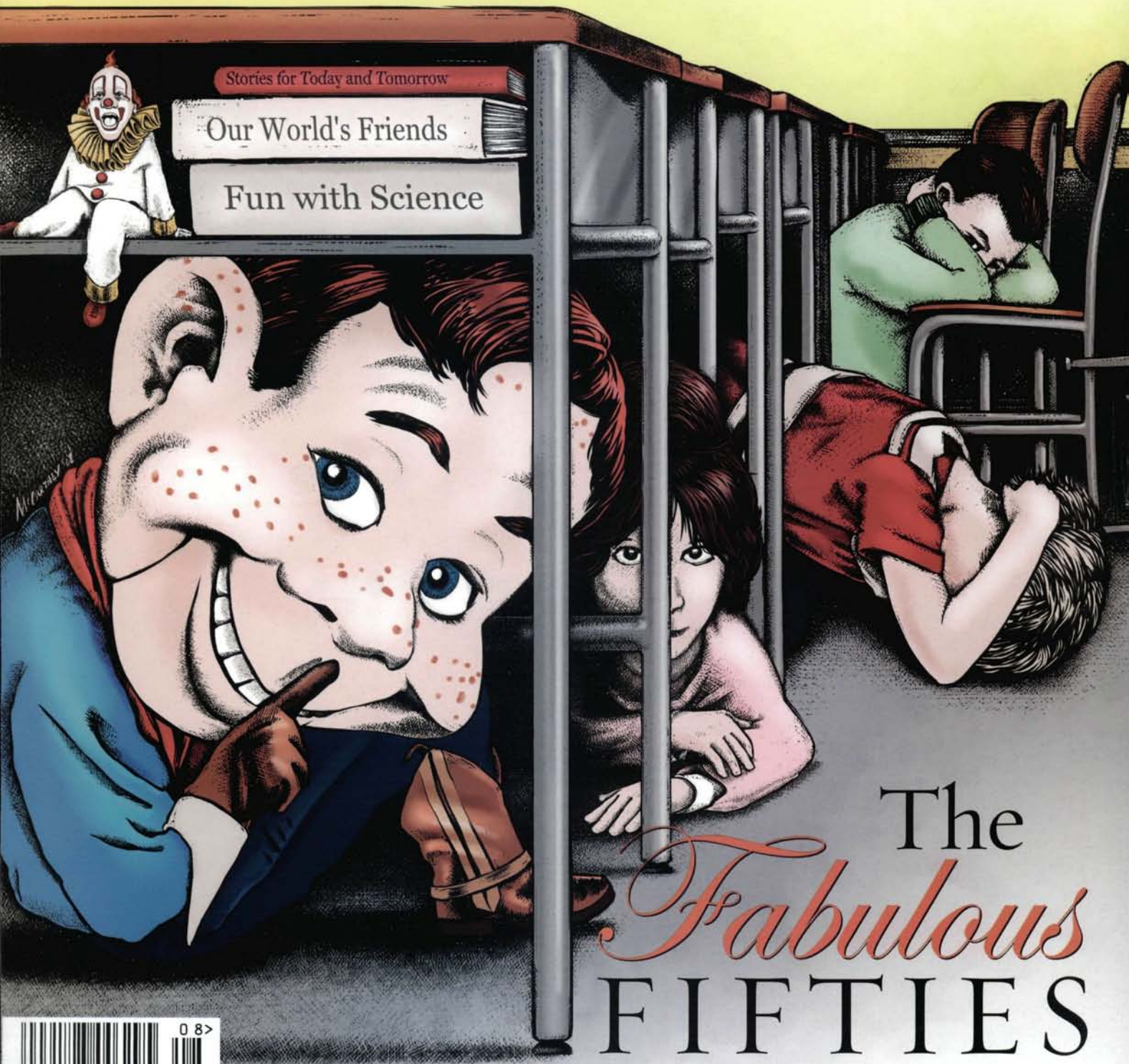

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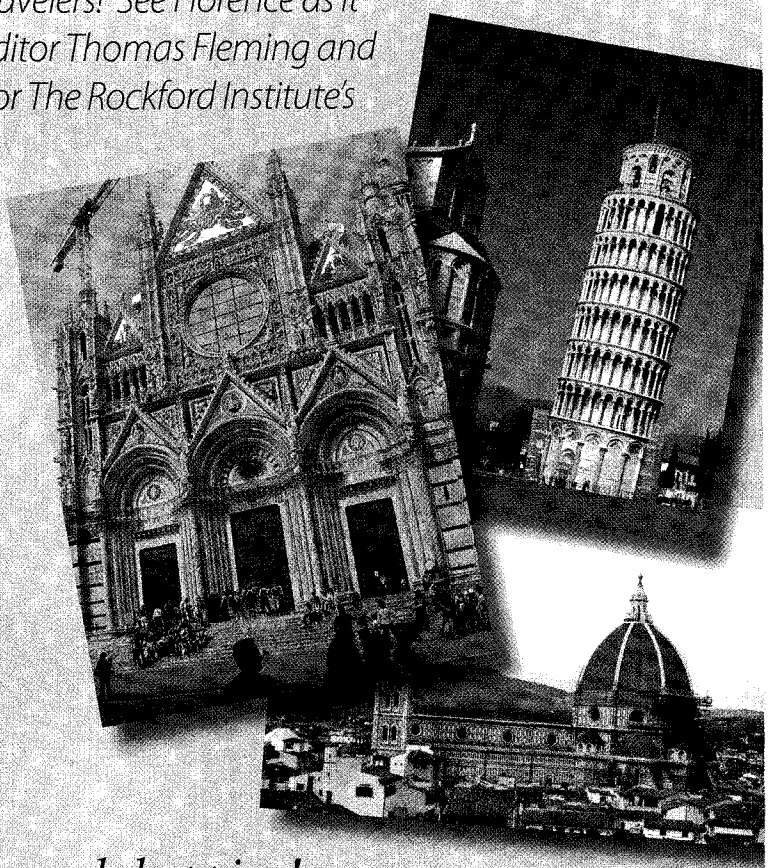

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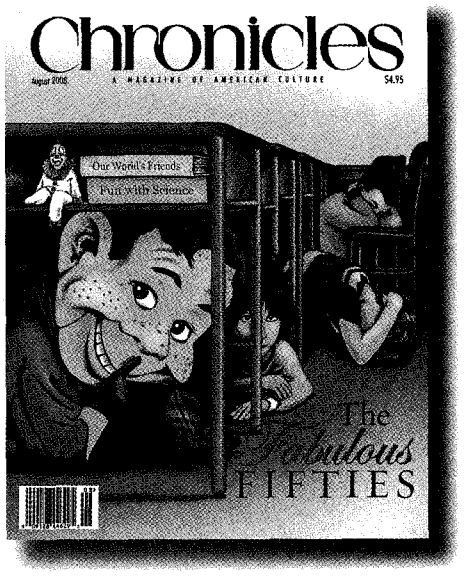

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On Religion and Utopia

I am an admirer of Derek Turner's writing and his work as editor of *Right Now!* and *Quarterly Review*. Yet I sense that he cuts John Gray undeserved slack in his review of Gray's book, *Black Mass: Religion and the Death of Utopia* ("The Skeptical Mind," *Opinion*, June). I have not read this book, nor do I intend to, but from Turner's summation I gather that there really is not much to choose between Gray's apparently bottomless skepticism and that of "Marxist professor Terry Eagleton," cited by Turner to the effect that "progress is a myth, freedom a fantasy, selfhood a delusion, morality a kind of sickness, justice a mere matter of custom and illusion our natural condition." This is the terminal nihilism and relativism characteristic of the left today, especially in its academic mode. Like Eagleton, Gray apparently makes what is now the common error among our intelligentsia of lumping "religion" (any religion) indiscriminately with "ideology" and rejecting them all as hopelessly utopian.

But the truest skepticism is skeptical even of itself. Leftists, disillusioned by the failure of one particular ideology, Marxism, have concluded that *all* truth claims must be bogus. This is obviously the reaction of an angry infant. Do Gray and Eagleton reject "progress"? Good! Because Chesterton was right to caution us that if we are to "progress," we must be quite certain we are progressing toward Heaven and not toward Hell. The left was not wrong to contemplate improvement to the human condition; they just looked to the wrong place: the current vale of tears as opposed to the Kingdom yet to come. But this will be God's Kingdom according to Christianity, the religion of our civilization for two millennia. The left's error was in substituting a man-designed "utopia" or "ideal" society. But man's flawed nature cannot construe an unflawed world.

So Gray and company appear to be throwing out the baby with the bath water. I am glad that they are against utopian social engineering. But to associate it with Christian soteriology is to confuse truth with falsehood, the real thing—providing spiritual and cultural sustenance for centuries—with the demonic imitation (providing only emptiness and death). To consider two opposites to be in fact variants of the same thing is to be indiscriminate, to think unclearly.

—Jonathan Chaves
Washington, D.C.

Mr. Turner Replies:

I am grateful to Professor Chaves for his kind remarks—although whatever hackwork I do pales into insignificance when compared with his reputation as an Orientalist.

In the review, I did criticize Professor Gray for designating secular belief systems as "religions." But perhaps I was unclear in relation to Terry Eagleton. Unlike Gray, Eagleton is a staunch believer in "progress." This is why Eagleton dislikes Gray so much, and conversely one of the reasons why I admire Gray, despite disagreements with many aspects of his outlook. I would much prefer Gray's bracing disbelief in all systems and all ideologies—for which there are many conservative precedents, such as Balthasar Gracian—to Eagleton's strange combination of economic socialism and aspirational moral mush. This latter is curiously similar in tone and content to the neoconservative moral mush that underpins the Iraq adventure. Unlike Eagleton, Gray would accept that "man's flawed nature cannot construe an unflawed world."

Gray may make mistakes, but he is unafraid to make them, or to learn from them, and is willing to stare into Maistre's "abyss." He is invariably honest, and infinitely more cultivated and alert than the likes of Professor Eagleton, or many mainstream conservative pundits. Even when you disagree, he makes you work out why you disagree.

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by Thomas Fleming

Sex and Marriage in San Francisco

The California Supreme Court, in striking down the state's ban on same-sex "marriage," has issued a declaration of independence from the human race. Progressives have inevitably compared it to the legalization of interracial marriage, but the same progressives just as inevitably will hail the legalization of cross-species marriage as the next giant step for mankind. After that we can expect to see a whole series of taboos collapse like dominoes: incest, pederasty, and cannibalism–consensual, of course. We're not savages, after all.

Conservatives are naturally shocked by this latest proof that this is not the America found in their *McGuffey Readers* or in back issues of *National Review*. The conservative delusion is that America, despite a few kooks in high places, is really a sound, decent, Christian nation. All we need to do, as one of Rush Limbaugh's callers said recently, is to get "our message" out to the American people, and before long we will rule the planet from our safe haven of offshore drilling, low taxes (and high deficits), and good old public schools (c. 1959) with pretty, drug-free cheerleaders and the Ten Commandments displayed proudly on the walls. This may be all that conservatives have left to cling to. But, for that reason, it is all the more pernicious. We are not going back to the 1950's.

If we stick just to issues of marriage and family, can anyone seriously suggest that America is a Christian country? Down to the beginning of the 20th century, Christians were pretty much in agreement on these issues. Abortion was evil and had to be kept illegal; contraception was an immoral means of frustrating the natural purpose of sexuality as designed by the Creator; divorce and remarriage were wrong except in extreme cases. While Catholics and Protestants might have disagreed about what constituted an extreme case, they agreed perfectly that divorce could not be justified except where incest was discovered or where one party had so abused the other (by adultery, desertion, *etc.*) as to make living together impossible. There is no need to trace the steps by which divorce, contraception, and even adultery became acceptable in many large denominations, but it should come as no surprise when progressive Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Methodist, Congregationalist, and Lutheran ministers express approval of "gay marriage," or even go so far as to give their blessing on these unions.

From the pre-Christian point of view, marriage is a contract between a man and a woman and/or their respective families to cohabit, enjoy conjugal relations, and rear children. The husband, generally speaking, was required to support his wife and the children, though her family might well have to provide a dowry. If the marriage was dissolved, the husband kept the children (a rule that persisted down to the middle of the 19th century) but had to return the dowry. Governments had almost nothing to say about marriage except as it involved inheritance, dowries, guardianship, and the marriage of heiresses.

With the spread of Christianity, a more spiritual dimension to marriage was added. A minister was invited to give the Church's blessing on the union, and Christ's statement on divorce was enforced: A man who puts aside a wife to marry another is himself an adulterer as well as an agent of his wife's adultery, should she marry again. Protestants and Catholics would dispute the details of this prohibition, but the dispute hardly touches most divorces today. The state's involvement came during the Reformation. Luther disliked the Catholic Church's intervention in certain cases (recognizing clandestine marriages against the parents' wishes) and turned the regulation of marriage over to the princes. In England, the Church remained the regulatory agency, but She was under the supervision of the crown and parliament. If Protestants made a mistake, it is one best recognized in hindsight, since their object was to strengthen families, not to weaken them.

Christian marriage is a spiritual as well as a natural union of a man and woman, unbreakable except in extreme cases. Judges and politicians can tell any lie they like, but there can be no such thing as "same-sex marriage" any more than *heat* can be *cold* or *nothing something*. Government has nothing to do with marriage, and we should cease expecting governments to provide a remedy for a disease they have willfully and maliciously created.

The creation of the welfare state and the massive taxation imposed to sustain it mean that a couple will have to secure a license, but Christians should begin to regard that document as nothing more serious than a dog license.

Should conservative Christian defenders of marriage throw up their hands and give up? Of course not. Even if they fail at every turn, they have the duty to bear witness to the truth. At the same time, they should try to understand the error of permitting the state to usurp the authority of families and the Church. A church that performs marriages involving divorcés or divorcées who have willfully and unjustifiably abandoned their spouses has rejected Christ's teachings. These same churches acknowledge homosexual rights, feminism, and even–prayerfully and painfully–regard abortion as a woman's right. If they cannot be reformed, they should be abandoned and left in the hands of the Lord of This World, who is their true master. And let all Christians, who accept Christ's word as law, come together, not only to condemn divorce and "gay marriage," but to reaffirm the sanctity of marriage within their communities of faith. ◈

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A PERFECT STORM OVER IOWA

Take one part high fuel prices. Mix in stagnant wages and high consumer prices generally. Stir in global uncertainty and an ever-exploding human population. Add misplaced production and chimera-chasing. Add to all that the floods of May and June 2008 that inundated much of Iowa, Illinois, and Missouri, and you have a perfect storm—at least as far as corn is concerned. When it clears, corporate business will be the richer, but the world will be in chaos—and hungry.

True, the world is always in chaos. True, much of the world is always hungry. True, rivers flood: It is in their job description that they do so. Yet it is only in recent times that it has become customary for them to do huge amounts of damage, monetarily and physically, when they flood, for it is only in recent times that builders, insurers, growers, and consumers have decided to repeal the laws of physics and build on, settle in, and plow lands that are tellingly labeled floodplains on hydrographic maps. Granted that this happens in California and New York, these days, as much as in the Midwest, but it is suggestive that Iowa, for one, is now clocking hundred-year floods every three or four years. It is not that the rivers have grown any larger or more likely to flood, but that targets for ruin have come to the rivers in increasing number, with inevitable result.

The habit of overlooking physical reality in the hope that nature will somehow play ball is a curiously American trait, and it will play out in all our pocketbooks in the near term. For this year the floods, more than sweeping away a few cars and inauspiciously located homes, are carrying off a good portion of the nation's corn crop. That crop was already oversubscribed, thanks to record demand for maize worldwide, especially in booming economies such as China and India, and to the ever-increasing use of corn to produce bioethanol. In response to that demand, corn acreage has been increasing across the nation: In 2006, 78.3 million acres were under cultivation for corn, while in 2007 the figure was 90.5 million acres. In Iowa, with the largest amount of land in any state devoted to it, 13.9 million acres went to corn in 2007, up from 12.6 million acres in 2006; elsewhere in the Midwest and Upper South, the production of previously important crops such as soybeans, rice, and cotton fell markedly as farmers shifted to corn.

This is the largest acreage given over to corn since World War II, with no exigency other than the hope for profit driving the boom. Corn has become big business, and so, for once, has all the infrastructure supporting it, to say nothing of the ground on which it grows; for the first time since the mid-1970's, the value of cropland rose faster, by percentage, than that of residences in the world's most-expensive cities, a boon to landholders, more and more of them corporations and fewer and fewer of them individuals. Late in June 2008, the fertilizer and oilseed firm Bunge Ltd. bought Corn Products International for $4.4 billion to secure its hold on "finished corn products," mainly starches and sweeteners, but also to consolidate its land holdings to take advantage of the boom; meanwhile, Cargill and Archer Daniels Midland, the nation's largest agribusinesses, concentrated on ethanol production, adding billions to coffers that have grown larger simply by virtue of a solid real-estate portfolio.

Corn is in high demand, and this has had the effect of driving up food prices dramatically. But the laws of supply and demand apply only so far, for, contrary to them, prices did not fall when agribusinesses began producing corn from horizon to horizon. Just the reverse occurred, thanks to that pressing international competition for what is globally appearing to be a scarce resource—maize in particular, that is, but, in the coming years, foodstuffs in general. Indeed, corn topped seven dollars per bushel in June, twice the level of June 2007. Like that of oil, the price of corn promises to go nowhere but north, particularly given the loss of so much of this year's crop.

The floods of 2008 will restrict supply in the near term. So will the cost of oil; according to the USDA, it is projected that corn acreage will fall to 86 million acres in the coming harvest, mostly as a response to what economists call "input costs"—namely, the price of the fuel and petrochemical fertilizers needed to grow crops on an industrial scale. (And why not use corn-based ethanol for fuel? Because it's too expensive—but now we're getting into matters that are headache-inducing in their complexity.) Mexico, India, and other Third World countries are rushing to make up the difference as U.S. producers continue to turn over crops to fuel production instead of food, but the perfect storm has already done its damage. In its wake can come only poverty and hunger.

—Gregory McNamee

LIBERTY'S CLOSE CALL

Americans view liberty as a birthright guaranteed by a written Constitution and Bill of Rights. Feeling overly secure in their liberties, most cannot imagine any branch of the federal government abrogating constitutional rights such as the freedom of the press or of assembly. These First Amendment guarantees are enshrined in the Bill of Rights in clear, unmistakable language.

Moreover, in interpreting the Constitution, the judiciary often has a tendency to expand enumerated rights rather than to restrict them. For example, the Supreme Court has gone so far as to use the "penumbras" and "emanations" from the Third Amendment's prohibition on quartering troops to strike state laws regulating contraceptives.

Freedom and written constitutional guarantees, however, should not be

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taken for granted. On June 26, the Supreme Court came within one vote of erasing the Second Amendment from the Bill of Rights. This amendment, of course, reads as follows: "A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed."

The plain language recognizes a personal right, belonging to "the People," to possess firearms. Through legal legerdemain, gun-control advocates and four justices sought to limit the Second Amendment to military service.

District of Columbia v. *Heller* was a challenge to Washington, D.C.'s total ban on possession of usable handguns in the home. Under the district's laws, it is a crime to carry an unregistered firearm, and the registration of handguns is prohibited. Registered long guns kept in the home must be unloaded and disassembled or bound by a trigger lock. The result is that citizens have no legal means of defending themselves, should an intruder enter their residences.

In a 5-4 decision written by Justice Antonin Scalia, the Court struck down the D.C. gun laws and held that the Second Amendment is "an individual right having nothing whatever to do with service in a militia." Justice Scalia traced the origin of the right to bear arms to Great Britain, where the eminent jurist William Blackstone in 1765 recognized that it was "the natural one of resistance and self-preservation." In his Americanization of Blackstone's *Commentaries*, St. George Tucker noted that the Second Amendment permitted a citizen to "repel force by force" when "the intervention of society in his behalf, may be too late to prevent injury."

Justice Scalia further noted that history taught the founding generation that tyrants sought to oppress the people not by banning militias, but by taking away the people's arms, enabling a select militia, or raising a standing army. Anti-Federalists feared that the new federal Congress would use its power to organize, arm, and discipline the militia to create a select militia or to ban it outright. Thus, to guard against these possibilities, the Second Amendment was added to the Constitution and cannot be viewed as a corporate right associated with military service.

Scalia opined that, "if [the district and mayor] are correct, the Second Amendment protects citizens' right to use a gun in an organization from which Congress has plenary authority to exclude them. It guarantees a select militia of the sort the Stuart kings found useful, but not the people's militia that was the concern of the founding generation."

In other words, a corporate right associated with military service would not have addressed Antifederalist criticisms and would have done nothing to limit federal power. Under the district's interpretation, the Second Amendment would have been a meaningless, cosmetic addition to the Bill of Rights.

Heller is being described as one of the most important Court decisions of the new century. While it is a landmark case and the Court reached the right result, Americans should not forget that this was a 5-4 decision. Four justices of the Supreme Court would have ignored the plain language and historical context to permit the disarming of the citizenry. Believing themselves at liberty to rewrite fundamental law, these justices would leave Americans at the mercy of street thugs and federal tyranny. The efforts of the four dissenting justices should alarm Americans and remind them that constitutional liberties are not as secure as they might think.

—*William Watkins*

GUANTANAMO SUPREME

Do suspected Al Qaeda terrorists captured in Afghanistan and taken to the U.S.-operated prison at our naval base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, have a right guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution to contest their detention in the U.S. civilian courts? According to five members of the U.S. Supreme Court, who agreed with an opinion by Justice Anthony Kennedy in the case of *Boumediene* v. *Bush*, decided on June 12, the answer is yes. John McCain, the presumptive Republican nominee for president, declared that this was "one of the worst decisions in the history of this country." Associate Justice Antonin Scalia, dissenting in the case (joined by Justices Thomas, Roberts, and Alito), declared that there was absolutely no legal authority to support the result reached by the majority and that the decision "will almost certainly cause more Americans to be killed." Barack Obama, the presumptive nominee of the Democratic Party, praised the decision and declared it "a rejection of the Bush administration's attempt to create a legal black hole at Guantanamo." "This is an important step," said Obama, "toward re-establishing our credibility as a nation committed to the rule of law."

Who got it right? The closest constitutional-law precedent was *Johnson* v. *Eisentrager* (1950), in which the Supreme Court had held that German prisoners of war, captured in Germany and held in a U.S.-administered prison, could not invoke the protection of any rights they possessed in U.S. courts. The Bush administration argued that *Johnson* meant that the federal courts had no jurisdiction over prisoners captured outside the United States who were held outside this country. The accused Al Qaeda terrorists (or, more precisely, their American lawyers) argued that, since the United States exercises control over Guantanamo, it should be treated as if it were in the United States, and no one contested that federal courts would have jurisdiction to decide the legality of custody of prisoners held in jails in the United States. For reasons that remain unclear even after reading Justice Kennedy's 70-page decision, the majority bought the plaintiffs' argument.

Anthony Kennedy is the Supreme Court's swing justice, an unpredictable jurisprude who seems to relish his position flitting back and forth between the Court's four-person liberal (Stevens, Souter, Ginsburg, and Breyer) and conservative (Scalia,

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Thomas, Roberts, and Alito) blocs. Kennedy has notoriously borrowed principles from foreign jurisdictions, as, for example, in the recent Supreme Court decisions declaring it unconstitutional to carry out the death penalty on mentally handicapped defendants and to criminalize consensual acts of homosexual sodomy. He seems to believe that he is acting on a world-historical stage, and perhaps Barack Obama has sensed that. None of this augurs well for the kind of people that a President Obama might appoint to the Court.

On the other hand, there is something a tad troubling in the Bush administration's position that decisions about who to incarcerate indefinitely on foreign soil are the exclusive domain of the executive branch, and, as Kennedy suggested, it was that "separation of powers" problem that called for the intervention of the courts, to keep the executive from running amok. Previous Supreme Court decisions had suggested, however, that Congress had the power to mandate military tribunals to try the question of lawful custody at Guantanamo, and that was precisely what Congress had done, in a manner that the four dissenting justices in *Boumediene* declared was perfectly proper and which prevented arbitrary action on the part of the military. In denouncing the President, Senator Obama conveniently left out the fact that the Bush administration was operating pursuant to congressional mandates.

Unless one believes that only the civilian courts of the United States can serve as the arbitrator of the conduct of our Armed Forces during wartime, Justice Kennedy's opinion is troubling. Until *Boumediene*, the Court was not as Supreme as it now is. Friends of the rule of law must now ask themselves whether the Constitution is safest in the hands of a shifting, lifetime tenured five-person majority of the United States Supreme Court or in the hands of the President and Congress—the political branches, which at least must submit themselves to periodic elections.

—*Stephen B. Presser*

BAD WHITEY 101

In this space in the June issue, readers learned about a flock of students from the American Studies program at Randolph College who flapped off to the Chicken Ranch Brothel in Nevada to study the profundities of the cathouse. They also learned about yet another aesthete who believes emissions from the nether regions of the human anatomy constitute art. But these two contributions to the chronicles of the campus have nothing on the University of Delaware's failed Residence Life Program. Whereas the other schools joined the culture war with attacks on erudition and art, UD is battling against the White Man—not that the other schools haven't honed their ideological tomahawks to lift a white scalp or two.

UD's Residence Life program for incoming students did not, as you might expect, confine itself to imparting lessons on the city's bus system or hip restaurants and beer joints. Instead, it taught students what's wrong with whitey.

Consider these excerpts from the program's core document: "A RACIST: A racist is one who is both privileged and socialized on the basis of race by a white supremacist (racist) system. The term applies to all white people (i.e., people of European descent) living in the United States.... By this definition, people of color cannot be racists, because as peoples within the U.S. system, they do not have the power to back up their prejudices, hostilities, or acts of discrimination. (This does not deny the existence of such prejudices, hostilities, acts of rage or discrimination.)

"REVERSE RACISM: A term created and used by white people to deny their white privilege. Those in denial use the term reverse racism to refer to hostile behavior by people of color toward whites.... In the U.S., there is no such thing as 'reverse racism.'

"A NON-RACIST: A non-term. The term was created by whites to deny responsibility for systemic racism, to maintain an aura of innocence in the face of racial oppression, and to shift responsibility for that oppression from whites to people of color (called 'blaming the victim')."

Last year, when the university watchdog group FIRE (the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education) publicized this bizarre screed, UD's president canceled the program. "While I believe that recent press accounts misrepresent the purpose of the residential life program at the University of Delaware," he declaimed, "there are questions about its practices that must be addressed and there are reasons for concern that the actual purpose is not being fulfilled. It is not feasible to evaluate these issues without a full and broad-based review."

How one could "misrepresent" the purpose of the program is unimaginable, given the inflammatory and naked vitriol directed at palefaces. This is the key demographic group, of course, supporting the university through contributions. In any event, this past spring, a new, improved program rose from the ashes of the old one. The program plan published online does not include the words *racist* or *racism* or *hate*, or even the cosmically silly *multicultural*. *Diversity* shows up six times, which must be an all-time low for a document published by university eggheads.

What possessed UD's administration to create such a program, and what did they hope to accomplish? Since it is whites who are promoting this nonsense, antiwhite racism doesn't fully explain it. Rather, the "all-whites-are-racist" trope emerging from the First State's phrontistery and other education factories is merely part of the radical left's broader attack on Western culture and Christianity, which the left perceives as white racial artifacts impeding the imposition of leftist ideology on society. If all whites are racist, then so is Western civilization. And so, then, is Christianity itself.

Much of this racialism emerges from an ideology for which "race does not exist." So, how can one destroy something that isn't there?

Even leftist race deniers know that race exists. But leftism is inherently mendacious. Even worse, it is con-

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genitally totalitarian and viciously anti-Christian. It has always sought to destroy the Church. The historical fact that Caucasian missionaries successfully proselytized the Faith, along with its artistic, musical, and literary riches, is why whites, at long last, are a preferred and open target in the left's war on culture and religion.

So the charge of racism only superficially attacks whites and really strikes at Western culture and the Faith itself, for anything affiliated with the white man must also bear the mark of Cain with which the left has branded him.

—*R. Cort Kirkwood*

GETTYSBURG AGITPROP

The field of Gettysburg is perhaps the closest thing to a sacred place, a Mount Olympus, to be found in our secular-minded land. The battle itself contains enough epic material for the admiration, contemplation, and inspiration of a hundred generations of Americans, if there should be so many. This is all lost on the U.S. National Park Service, which is busy, under congressional mandate, converting Gettysburg and other battlefields into conduits of p.c. propaganda. The new visitors' center at Gettysburg is an immense ugly barn with a very badly designed pattern of interior displays, but that is the least of its problems. The USNPS now deems it less important to explain the great events of that place than to impart a lesson about slavery, the alleged true and only cause of the battle, and the supposed supreme issue of our national existence.

Though currently fashionable among academics, this reduction of the greatest events of our history to a simplistic monocausal and emotion-laden portrayal is politically motivated and present-centered. It is designed to kill off any view of the rich complexity of human experience and instill a robotic adherence to a party line. The original source of such agitprop tactics is without doubt Marxist class-conflict dialectics, with the cultural Marxist race obsession overlaid.

It would certainly be a surprise to the Northern soldiers in that battle to learn that the significance of Gettysburg was only that it was "about" slavery. Interestingly, with all the emphasis on slavery, the displays, as far as I could find, do not refer at all to the few fugitive slaves that were allegedly seized by Confederates in Pennsylvania, though this is a hot topic among historians at the moment. No doubt the propagandists were afraid that if they mentioned that, hundreds of people would bring up the absence of any reference to the 5,000 or more black men, both slave and free, who were with the Confederate army on the way to, and the way from, Pennsylvania.

Curiously, the custodians of our national memory at Gettysburg anachronistically deem it appropriate to present Reconstruction, which is portrayed as a utopia of "biracial democracy" and black empowerment. This is the strict Marxist line. No mention is made of the evils of military government, the looting and stealing, the fraudulent elections, the broken promises of help to the freedmen, Northern motives other than altruism, or any violence that was not initiated by evil Southerners against innocent blacks and carpetbaggers.

The Gettysburg battlefield, sacred to our memory, is now a crime against us all. Like so many things these days in our "democracy," this is the work of a powerful minority against the opinion of the majority. The new dispensation cheats the host of normal Americans who seek some true connection with their past. For a certain type of American it renews the phony and unearned sense of righteous benevolence that is a blot on our national character and a curse to mankind. It tells Southerners what we already well know—that we have no role in the American story except as Chief Villain. For African-Americans, their authentic history is converted into a cheap political tactic by self-appointed leaders building momentum for "reparations."

—*Clyde Wilson*

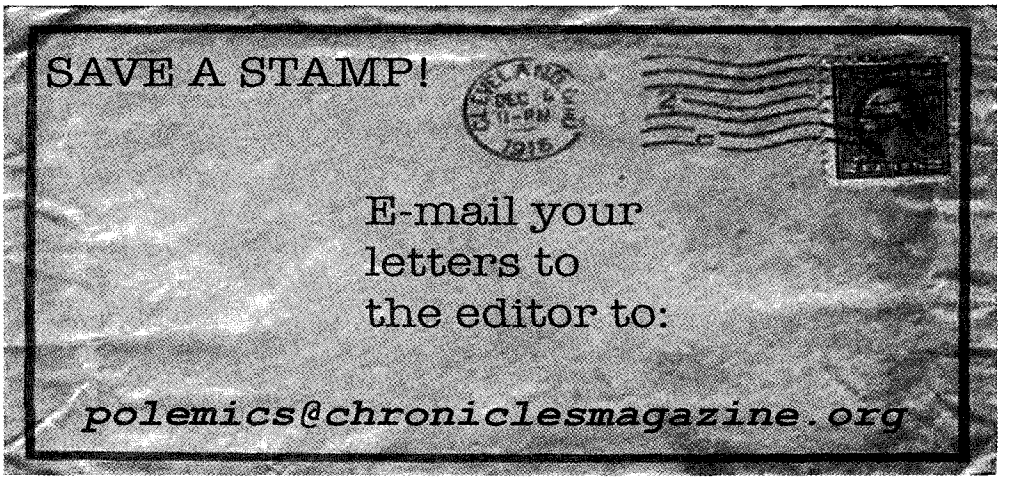
OBITER DICTA

It is with deep sadness that we announce the death of our longtime masthead editor, **George Garrett**. Please see our forthcoming September issue for a special memorial.

Our poet this month is **Alan Sullivan**. Mr. Sullivan's poetry has appeared in numerous journals, including *Poetry*, *The Dark Horse, The Spectator,* and *The Hudson Review*. He writes from Dania Beach, Florida.

Our cover art is provided by our interior artist, **George McCartney, Jr.** Mr. McCartney studied at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and received a bachelor's of art from the State University of New York at Geneseo. Since 1997, he has worked in various media in the fields of illustration, graphic design, and textiles. George currently resides in North Carolina with his wife, Kristin, and their children.

Our interior art is provided by **Melanie Anderson**. Mrs. Anderson, our designer, received her B.F.A. from Northern Illinois University.



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by Thomas Fleming

Lost in the 50's

It was about 1965, in Jimmy Dengate's "club" in Charleston, when I got my first clue to what the 50's had been all about. I met an unusual sportswriter. Let us call him Jack, if only because it was his real name. Jack was unusual, because he could write decent prose, knew something about sports, and did not hate athletes—three of the rarest qualities in sports writing and hardly ever encountered in the same person. When Jack learned that I had "literary interests," he told me about an old friend of his youth, Mickey Spillane, who now lived some two hours up Highway 17 in Murrells Inlet. Spillane had not always been a comic-book and thriller writer, interested only in broads and bullets. As a young man, so Jack claimed, he was a great fan of James Joyce and aspired to literary greatness.

At the time I thought nothing of the story, though years later, living in McClellanville, I several times thought of trying to arrange a meeting with South Carolina's most famous resident novelist. But it is a curious fact—if it is indeed a fact—that the gruff and violent creator of Mike Hammer was really a disgruntled modernist. Like so much that went on in the 1950's, a good deal of what we had taken for granted simply was not so.

It was a difficult decade—more like 17 or 18 years, stretching from the conclusion of World War II to the assassination of John F. Kennedy. Those of us who were growing up at this time were doomed to undergo a second failed experiment in returning to "normalcy"—the non-word coined by Warren Harding to express his administration's desire to overturn the economic and political revolution that justified socialist planning and the silencing of dissidence on the grounds of national security.

From the beginning America had been reinventing herself in response to crisis: the Revolution, the War Between the States, massive immigration, World War I, the social and moral revolution of the "Jazz Age," the Depression, and, most recently, World War II. In a country that was now so diverse—ethnically, geographically, religiously—it was probably inevitable that politicians would learn how to cobble together some set of ideological principles to substitute for an historical reality that was too complex to unify a people. We were thus a "nation dedicated to a proposition," a country that would go to war to save democracy, the apostle of the Four Freedoms.

The ugly truth is that much of the American elite had embraced the ideology of revolution at least a generation before the War Between the States. What else were Emerson and Thoreau doing, with their childish babblings about Eastern religion and their immoral support for the terrorist John Brown? The revolution really got moving, however, only after World War I, as so many young Americans moved off the farm and out of their native hamlets and embraced the liberating culture of jazz, booze, and swinging. The contempt with which the revolutionaries viewed the old Christian America can be seen in any random page written by the younger writers of the 20's and 30's—Theodore Dreiser and Sinclair Lewis, Hemingway and Fitzgerald and James Branch Cabell, and Cabell's biggest booster, Henry Mencken, who should have known better.

That social, moral, and religious revolution had been postponed, it is true, during 15 years of depression and war. What would happen when the war was over? Obviously, the literary, intellectual, and political elite were determined to finish the revolutionary agenda. On the other side, the "conservatives"—for want of a more accurate word to describe a cross-section of liberals and reactionaries—were equally determined to stand in the way. Although the conservatives would temporarily postpone—though not really retard—the progress of the revolution, they would never quit trying. And even before the end of the 1960's, the 50's were being seen as a golden age of moral restraint and social decency that should be the model for any future conservative restoration. When television commercials for Ronald Reagan (whose presidency was Act Three of "Return to Normalcy") proclaimed it was "morning again in America," the point was that we had returned to a happier time when families gathered together in front of the TV and slurped their Campbell's Soup, laughing at the hijinks of Red Skelton and Milton Berle, and seeing themselves in the everyday problems of the Cleaver and Anderson households.

To the extent there is a conservative agenda today, it is to return to the 50's and to recommit our people to a program of vigorous nationalism. That is only one of many reasons why conservatism is doomed. In the mainstream form preached by the neoconservatives to their unwitting dupes in the Republican Party, Americans still have a nationalist duty to impose democracy—by which they mean consumerism and hedonism—around the world. For them—and I include the so-called Catholic neoconservatives—religious faith (like a tumor) comes in two forms. The benign form is a non-judgmental lifestyle choice that enabled those

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fictional soldiers in World War II movies—you remember, the Protestant, the Jew, and the Catholic—to cooperate to win the war. The malignant form is the kind of exclusive commitment that prevents believing Muslims, Christians, and Jews from intermarrying or even from promoting one another's religion. When conservatives say they "believe in religion," they are referring to the 50's myth of Judeo-Christianity, something in which no actually religious person can believe.

In the more extreme form, ejaculated by nationalist bloggers who describe themselves variously as "paleocon" or "post-paleocon" (it could not be a movement without a slogan), European-Americans have to wake up to reclaim their inheritance and assert European hegemony around the globe. They are more progressive than the neoconservatives, because they tend to hate religion *per se* as a force that divides Euro-Americans and keeps them weak, but their view of America is the same old tired stereotype of the Eden we lived in before the Kennedys and "Dr." King entered the garden. The 50's are inevitably described by jingle-writers as "fabulous," and they were—but only in the literal sense that they constitute a fable.

The classic statement of the 50's fable and virtually the only thing worth reading on the subject is Jeffrey Hart's *When the Going Was Good*, a book that is entertaining, often brilliant, and utterly wrong. If Professor Hart found the decade of Mailer and Monroe exciting, it was for reasons conservatives should deplore. If we can judge by the books, movies, and music of the period, the time had come to swing again. The hot new novels celebrated sex and violence (Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead*, Spillane's *I, The Jury*), ethnic antagonisms (James Baldwin's *Go Tell It on the Mountain*, Philip Roth's ominous 1959 debut, *Goodbye, Columbus*), anomie (*The Catcher in the Rye*, *Waiting for Godot*, *Catch-22*), leftist resentment (*Death of a Salesman* and anything else by Arthur Miller), contempt for the bourgeoisie (all the above, but also *On the Road*, *Howl*, and *Confessions of a Spent Youth* among many others). Yes, there were still decent bourgeois writers, and the *Saturday Evening Post*, but they were fuddy-duddies, holdovers from another generation.

Far from being a bastion of decency, a model for any future conservative America, the 50's were years of barely repressed chaos. Why, in the second age of normalcy, did American teenagers turn away from their parents' commercial pop music—the Dorsey brothers, Frank Sinatra, Doris Day—and embrace the music of hyperemotional anarchy created by Chuck Berry, Bo Diddley, Richard Penniman, Elvis Presley, Jerry Lee Lewis, and Carl Perkins? R&B and rock 'n' roll music were, it is true, less saccharine and stultifying than the elevator music that had dominated the postwar charts, and Jerry Lee and Little Richard were hardly less moral than Mr. Sinatra or Doris Day. ("I knew Doris Day before she was a virgin," sneered the neurotic pianist Oscar Levant, whose depression used to brighten up *The Tonight Show*.)

The revolution, throughout the 1950's, was always bubbling just under the surface. The American political elite had learned one important thing from wrestling with rebels for half a century: It takes a crisis amounting to a threat of extinction to unify a nation. Fortunately, there was such a threat: godless communism and its headquarters in the expanding Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. As Irving Kristol has quipped on more than one occasion, "If communism did not exist, it would have to be invented." Although George Kennan, the architect of our containment policy, fumed for decades, his prudent strategy for limiting Soviet expansion was turned into a full-blown nationalist ideology.

To the extent there is a conservative agenda today, it is to return to the 50's and to recommit our people to a program of vigorous nationalism. That is only one of many reasons why conservatism is doomed.

It was only to be expected. Throughout much of the 20th century, the American people had been subjected to a barrage of ideological slogans: We had a Square Deal, New Deal, Fair Deal, and soon would have a New Frontier and a Great Society. There was the New Freedom and the New Nationalism. We had waged the war to end all wars to save democracy, and Jack Kennedy was promising us a time for greatness. We children of the 50's went to school to be taught how to "duck and cover"—that is, how to put hands flat over the heads and kneel down under the desk to protect ourselves from a nuclear blast. Since then, our children have been indoctrinated into civil rights, human rights, women's rights, and children's rights; the rights of the handicapped—physically, mentally, and morally—and the superiority of all that is alien to American traditions.

The mythical crusades of the 50's were not simply "the moral equivalent of war": They might involve real killing and dying. Since the 50's, we have been fighting to preserve or advance democracy, or guarantee human rights, or share our way of life. In the end, what the President's speechwriters really mean is that we are justified in killing people who refuse to be like us.

We have been forced to march to this nationalist beat for decades, and it is small wonder if, from time to time, some segment of the American people gets tired of the lies and votes the nationalist rascals out of power, replacing them with a possibly worse set of antinationalist scoundrels. But as the years go by, it is hard to distinguish one side from the other. Mrs. Clinton may hate the United States and everything our country stood for until the last generation; she may believe in world government and loathe any petty attachment to kith and kin that falls short of a commitment to Marxist revolution, but she does not shrink from supporting the Ugly American policies that are making us the

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most hated nation on the face of the earth.

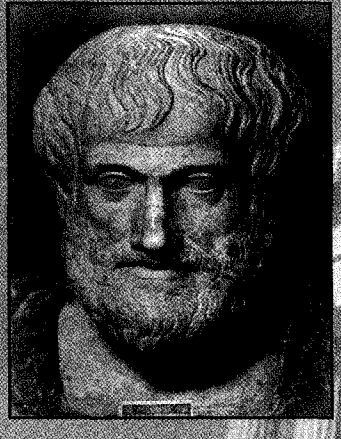
I do not know if it makes sense any longer even to apply the word *conservative* to any principles or political movement in the new America of the third millennium, but, assuming for the sake of argument that it does, conservatives have to wise up for a change and quite mooning over a past that never existed. Of course the 50's were better than today. We could and did leave our cars and houses unlocked; women could and did walk down urban streets unmolested; the bums and lowlifes did know their place; and even the worst music of the time is closer to Mozart than to "Lil Wayne" (who is being hailed as the next 50 Cent). But all of these virtues—moral, social, and aesthetic—were simply the residue of a Christian civilization that has been under constant attack for several centuries and is now more gone than the Old South.

We are not going to save ourselves by invoking religion and patriotism—two bad words used repeatedly in the 1950's to disguise the fact that the Christian Faith and love of country are about as highly regarded by the American ruling class as the smallpox virus, which has been virtually eradicated. For them, the only question is whether to eliminate them entirely or to preserve a few specimens to study in case of a future outbreak.

Even a revival of the Christian Faith, by itself, might not necessarily cure us of all our ills; and it is utter foolishness to pretend that the reinstallation of the Ten Commandments on courthouse walls would eliminate the judicial tyranny that persecutes Christians. Christianity is, nonetheless, the only real focal point for any conservative movement, and Christianity was the greatest victim of the hypocritical 50's.

Despite the higher rates of church attendance, the 50's were scarcely any more Christian than our own decade. A 1952 Gallup Poll revealed that, while 96 percent of Americans said they believed in God, hardly anyone knew Who gave the Sermon on the Mount. It was the time of spiraling divorce rates and, worse, the era of "Judeo-Christianity," when increasing numbers of Americans either came to view the Church as good business and a social necessity or gravitated toward the cults that promised to reorganize their lives. As President Eisenhower, the most potent symbol of the 50's, once declared, "Our government has no sense unless it is founded in a deeply felt religious faith, and I don't care what it is." Apparently not, since Ike's agricultural secretary, Ezra Taft Benson, ended up as the "Prophet" of the Mormons. And what of the symbol of the decade's darker side, Mickey Spillane? Despite his name, he was apparently brought up a nominal Protestant, yet he became a Jehovah's Witness in the early 1950's. Today, he might have chosen Islam or Scientology.

If we must seek models for the future in the past, let it be the inclusive past of Christendom in its most vigorous times and not the spiritually emaciated decade that added Norman Vincent Peale's *The Power of Positive Thinking* (1952) to the canon of Scripture. ◈



The Greek Conservative Mind

The Greeks invented political philosophy . . .
but not out of thin air

The ancient Greeks liberated themselves from the shackles of religion and tradition to pursue a dream of democracy, equality, and human rights. Right?

Wrong. We do well to remember the Greeks as they really were: their aristocratic pursuit of virtue, their general disdain for democracy, and their strong attachments to family and religion.

The Greek Conservative Mind is taught by Dr. Thomas Fleming, who is regarded as a leading authority on Greek lyric verse. Originally presented in the fall of 2004 as a lecture series at the Institute, the course now comprises 16 recorded lectures (on CD or audiotape) and a study guide with suggested readings, key terms, and discussion questions.

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Departures

by Alan Sullivan

No traffic along the frontage;
in the murk above, not a star;
your heap of invisible luggage
crowds the air from the car.

No time for regrets or reproaches;
planes are starting to land.
The terminal ramp debouches.
Like a stranger, you shake my hand.

Thirty-four years of denial
end in the dark before dawn,
not with a bottle-smash quarrel
but a sheriff waving me on.

Back home, I gather the laundry,
empty your ashtrays, and pour
a cup of lukewarm coffee
that dripped at quarter to four.

From your bed, no sterterous snoring;
in your closet, no Dickel to drain.
Next winter you won't be reverting.
I'm learning: my turn to abstain.

Miles away from "Departures,"
the first pelicans fly,
and rows of palm trees like sutures
are stitching a bloodied sky.

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Yankee, Go Home

Yankee, Come Home—Yankee, Get Lost

by James O. Tate

Sixty years ago an incident lodged in my memory forever as it seems, as I walked with the beautiful redheaded young lady who paused to ask me a question. There above an old outbuilding—I hesitate to call it a barn—there was a weathervane appearing as the silhouette of a rooster. But this image was perforated by several holes—.58 caliber, as I was later to learn—and my mother had a question for me: Now just who made those holes in the weathervane? I had no idea, but the answer suggested some thoughts to ponder: "The Yankees!" Whoever Yankees were, I, apparently, was not one of them, and neither was that lady with an abundance of red hair. And though I have known my share of disappointments since, the most deflating was to find out later that "foreigners" thought I was a Yankee. What a bummer, as they say in the parlance of our times.

I am still in contemplation of the implications of the image of the rooster and its ventilation. I was to learn more from the lady with the red hair—for example, that her paternal grandfather had fought in the Civil War. Though I could have asked for no better company than what I had at that moment of the blasted weathervane, I have sometimes thought that I could have used some additional feedback from, say, Homer, Heraclitus, Hegel, Marx, and Berra. Among the five of them, they could have straightened me out with a few insights relating the force of legend, the ambiguity of reality, the dialectic of history, tragedy repeated as farce, and how you can see a lot just by watching. Sometimes you do need a weathervane to see which way the wind blows.

There were other experiences that were cultural constructs. Music, for example—I remember music in the form of hymns sung at church. And in a more secular context, I remember hearing the radio—I remember the music that introduced "The FBI in Peace and War" (thank you, Mr. Prokofiev) and the music that introduced "Sergeant Preston of the Yukon" (*danke schön, Herr von Reznicek*). Remembering Jack Benny *et al.*, I do feel a certain queasiness as I contemplate hundreds of channels of tedium and innumerable examples of absurd "music." If we had known then where popular culture was going, would we have related to it at all?

I did not know as a little kid that I was coming in on the tail-end of something when I went to the movies. I saw *The Bride of Frankenstein* (1935) sitting on the hood of a car in a drive-in theater in 1951—no one told me that such a viewing was privileged, but it was. I was in a movie house when I saw *The Thing From Another World* (directed by Christian Nyby, 1951) in the year of its release, and it scared me so much I stayed indoors for two weeks. Less of a scaredy-cat today, I think of it not as a Nyby but as a prime Howard Hawks and even a film *noir*, and am gratified to own a DVD of it, as I am now the arbitrary master of my own exclusive film series. And that is a good thing, since they indeed don't make them like they used to; and since I am no longer afraid of flying monkeys, I can watch *The Wizard of Oz* all by myself if I want to, even in the dark. I mean to say that I am not afraid of flying monkeys in movies, though I am definitely afraid of flying monkeys when they have taken over the government, the academy, and the media. I seem to have the paranoid delusion that flying monkeys are trying to destroy me and everything I hold dear—now where could I have possibly gotten such an absurd notion?

I saw what I considered for five decades the best movie I ever saw in its first American release: *The Third Man* (Carol Reed, 1950). I understood nothing and felt everything. For some reason, I saw Boris Karloff in *The Black Room* (1935) projected as a first-run movie 50 years ago, and loved it. Boris still had what it takes in *The Haunted Strangler* (1958), and by that time, movies had begun a decline that was palpable and noted. Today, films are almost always overbearing and miscast and too loud and lacking in appeal. I miss faces and voices and command, and go to where they are—contemporary examples are rare.

But I am getting ahead of myself. Back in the 1950's, no doubt I was challenged by a presumption that mine was a normal state—my situation was how it was supposed to be. But my situation was not so ordinary, though the best part of it, I strangely discovered, was actually standard. I refer to the kind, patient, and free treatment I received from my parents. I was probably wrongly surprised to discover that the home life of my peers was nearly as pleasant as mine was, but I never did discover in another house as many books as there were in ours. The books put a mark on me—it seemed that I was supposed to read them, and I have been trying to catch up ever since. When I went off to college—a big mistake, and not

Contributing editor James O. Tate is a professor of English literature at Dowling College on Long Island.

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the last—I was shocked to hear over and over again how much each student I talked to hated his or her oppressive parents. And I felt set apart by that, and I still do, for I have never been impressed by the affectation of alienation, not then by James Dean, and not now by anyone or even by everyone.

There was one particular part of our lives that was a bit different, though it was shared by many: My father was in the service, so as an Air Force brat, I spent three years in Europe in the middle 50's. That was an education, of course, and one I responded to. It was one thing to be told that the French were bitter after three invasions in seventy years, but another to be spat on in the street and to find communist stickers on the door, signs that read "Yankee go home!" It was one thing to hear about the resentment of Americans and their money and their coarseness, and another to behold a uniformed GI as he lit up with a Zippo by the altar of a cathedral while declaring that the churches in Ohio were better. I understood that scene well enough, but if I presumed then that such grossness was an aberration to be corrected—well, I was wrong.

I remember seeing in France a lot of walls in towns that seemed to have received the black rooster or Roaring Twenties treatment—they were perforated by rows of hits from machine guns. And I saw evidence of other violence as well in fortified towns, in castles, and even in well-kept parks. I once discovered that a placid park was the deceptive surface of part of the Maginot Line. In Germany, I learned to keep my eyes peeled as I walked down the road, looking for the glint of copper or brass or the mass of darker stuff, for the ditches routinely released treasures such as discarded bandoliers and clips of .30 caliber, 9 mm, .50 caliber, and even 20 mm rounds, rusted weapons of all kinds, helmets, bayonets, fragments of ordnance, and so on. We did not neglect bikes and roller skates, but my friends and I also liked to build our own forts and play war with rusty but authentic weighty weaponry. We found out that in the junkyard you could buy anything for a Deutschmark: rusted machine guns, rocket-launching tubes, you name it. That was the second time I realized I had arrived on the scene of violence after the ball was over, but the ossuary at Verdun demonstrated that war was not a game. Later on, my father would not countenance my attending military school, nor did I ever hear one word of jingoism from him.

Lifting my eyes from the tempting ditches, though, I would see ordnance and weaponry that was all shiny—not rusty at all. I saw a lot of RB-26 Invaders, F-80 Shooting Stars, F-86 Sabres, Martin RB-57 Canberras, and British aircraft as well: Gloster Meteors and De Havilland Vampires. I once saw a binational war game so involved that it looked like a psychedelic pinball game, a hallucinatory sky-full of twisting, roaring jets. The sinister glamour of the vision and the booming soundtrack did provoke thoughts about why they were there and why we were there. Back in France, we had rejoiced coming home from the chateau that was our school on the day that Stalin died (which was also the day that Prokofiev died). In our minds, we kept score. But I never heard anyone say that we would be there in Germany for 55 more years, with no end in sight. Those were the quaint days in which the North Atlantic Treaty Organization actually abided by its title, with no consideration of Afghanistan. I think today that the Cold War implied a destructive metamorphosis of the country, for the end of that war has not registered on the economy or our military posture. Such was one dialectical force that I knew in the 50's, the consequences of which we live with still.

Looking back on it, I can see that my father had his ways of escape; one was fishing, and another was baseball. I remember walking to the top of a hill in Germany with him so he could get the Dodgers on shortwave radio. And of course I remember the great names of the outfielders in New York, and though we were out of the country, we saw the photographs of Willie Mays' catch off Vic Wertz in 1954—a great catch, yes, but as my father always insisted, it was followed by "an even greater throw." My father's love of baseball was a passion, but it put him in an awkward position in two ways. The first was that he did not see anything odd about the commodification of a game and what that necessarily entailed. The second was that he actually believed, because of the propaganda he read in the sports pages, that the interests of baseball were best served by rich old men making arbitrary and self-serving decisions. So the Dodgers went to L.A., and the Giants went to San Francisco, and baseball became a TV show, and now between the steroids and the artificial teams and the absurd schedules, sports is something that I pretty much stay away from. So my memories of 50's sports are clouded by a dialectical awareness of the destructive consequences of corporate-capitalist distortions. That does not mean that Duke Snider couldn't play, of course, or that later Sandy Koufax wasn't everything he was cracked up to be. But fishing was a better escape for my father, after all—as long as he could find a good place to pursue the art, and in those days, he could.

Returning to "stateside," we were quite aware of the Supreme Court decision of 1954, *Brown* v. *Board of Education*, that called for the integration of the schools with all deliberate speed. Growing up, I heard a lot about that and read a great deal. I wanted to know what my parents thought, of course, and that was clear: My father thought as a serviceman, and the services had already been integrated—therefore the integration of the schools was on its way. He never indicated that he thought integration was wrong. My mother thought that the integration of the schools was right, but even if it was not, it was coming anyway, and therefore the opportunity should be seized and engaged with. For my own part, I thought that the banality of the process was deflating and disappointing: The federal troops in Little Rock and at the University of Mississippi seemed a familiar pattern, as the Civil War, as it were, was refought during its own centennial. The

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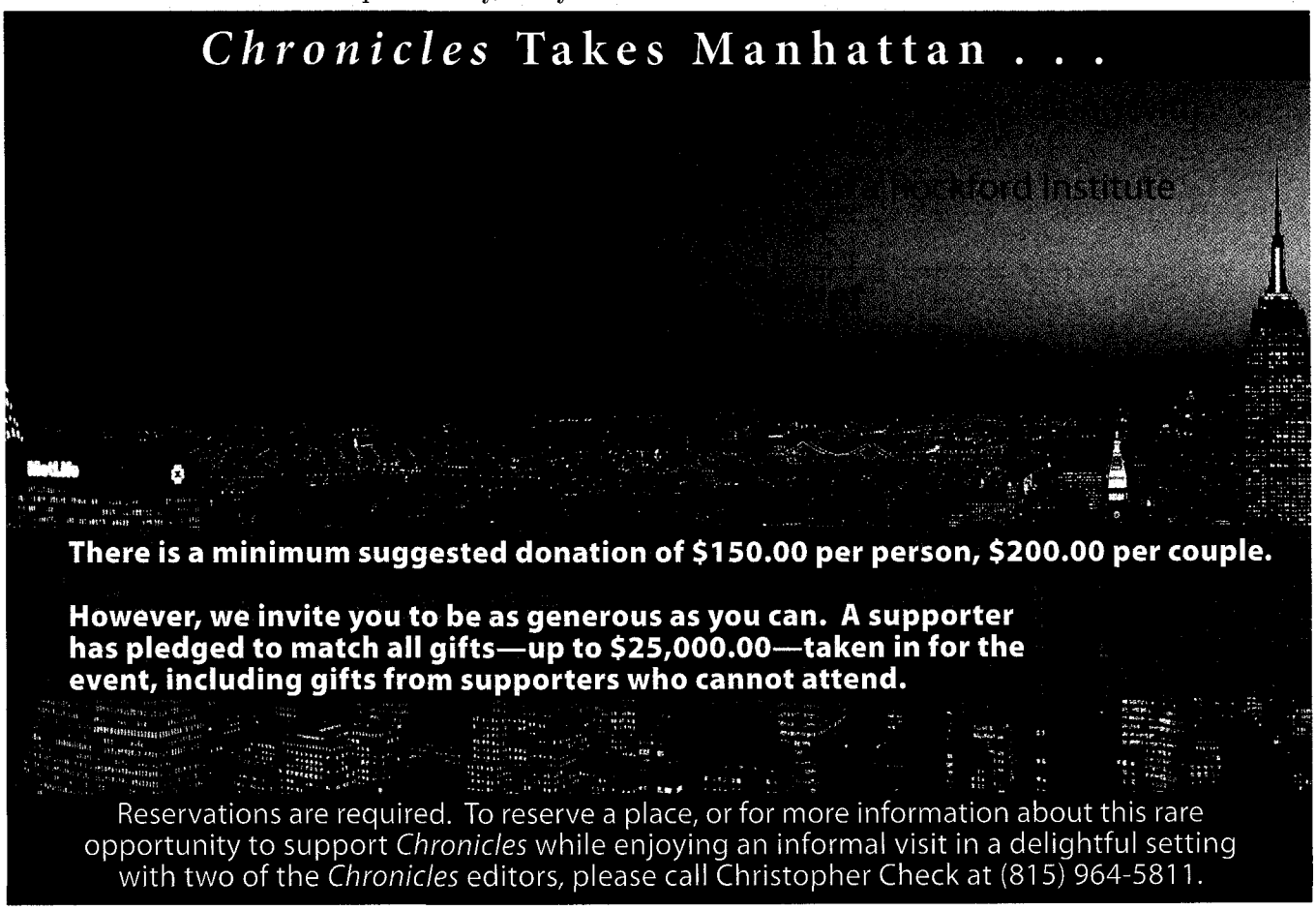
Southern response to the challenge was weak, clumsy, disorganized, and discredited. The Northern attitude was patronizing, abstract, armed, and triumphal—a familiar pattern. When the smoke cleared, another pattern emerged. There was a reverential unction attached to integration as an idol rather than as a means to an end. And then perhaps because of that, but certainly after that, the civil-rights movement morphed bizarrely into the feminist and homosexualist movements—movements that have appropriated the sanction and the clout formerly obtaining naturally to the civil-rights movement. No one can know how much was lost as the focus was diffused.

I remember some of the quaint issues of the day. Let's see: One issue of inequality was that textbooks in black schools were often inferior to those in white schools, or they were used textbooks that had been discarded by the white schools—therefore the black youngsters were not getting an equal chance at education. Yet I never saw a headline that blared Working-Class Whites Flaunt Glossy Chemistry Texts or one that pronounced Black Parents Demand Superior Calculus Books. The now-forgotten thought that integration would provide for black students access to the best minds and knowledge has been completely repressed because of sanctioned cultural resentments, and because of the nonsensical superiority of our pampered youth. There was a flaw in thinking that white students lived in some utopian fantasy, in any event. The tragedy, or perhaps the predictable disaster, was that integration was coincident with the 60's and its cultural dislocations, ones that pretty much put paid to the educational process, for if youth is knowledge, then there is no point to education at all. Segregation flourishes today in strange forms that do not challenge the education racket.

Having once been called a liar by "a woman of repellent aspect, remotely connected with education" for saying what I am about to reiterate, I will nevertheless insist that I had the good fortune to study Latin for five years of public high school. Back then, I did not know that it was the end of something, not the beginning, though I did know that Marcus Tullius Cicero and Publius Vergilius Maro were dead white males. I did realize that the conjunction of Bombs Away Attitudes and Abstract Niceness was an explosive blend—it led to bullet holes. But I never anticipated that I would hear so many Americans speak privately about leaving the country for good.

If baseball could be ruined and the creeks were fenced off and the schools were cerebrally inert, then nothing was secure—but then again, nothing ever had been. The lady's red hair is now of a less striking shade. Willie Mays was never at home in Candlestick Park. The dialectic of history has emptied the 50's of the implications of its elements and left behind for us some images and memories that we would retain—and too much more that we might as well consign to the inevitable oblivion toward which that decade hastens. ©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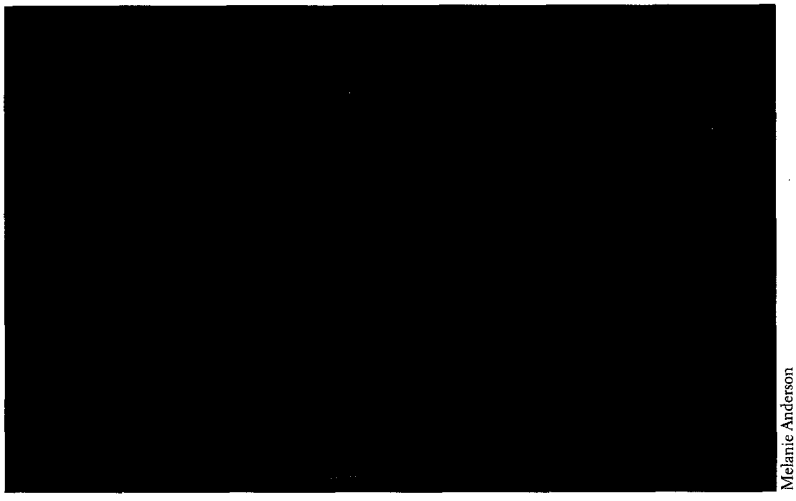
Videites

by Roger D. McGrath

You may have riches and wealth untold; / Caskets of jewels and baskets of gold.
But richer than I you will never be— / For I had a mother who read to me.
—Strickland Gillilan



Melanie Anderson

Perhaps more than most I wax nostalgic for the 50's, which was not a decade but an era that began in the late 1940's and lasted through the early 60's. It was the best of times for Southern California kids to grow up, especially for those of us in Pacific Palisades. On one side of our little town we had the ocean; on the other, the Santa Monica Mountains. We surfed uncrowded breaks when there were waves and hiked through unspoiled canyons when there weren't. When we turned 16, we rode motorcycles on highways that saw little traffic or on dirt fire roads that saw none. Moreover, it was long before the illegal-alien invasion, and most legal immigrants came from Western Europe. Cars were hot rods, fights were with fists, crime was infrequent, and life was good. There is little I would change about it.

An alien invader was present, however: television. It arrived as a seemingly innocuous technological novelty but would eventually transform Americans and America in ways never imagined. My own family was slow to adopt the new technology. I was five when we got our first TV, a small box with a 12" screen. My older sister was 11, and my older brother 18. Except for broadcasts of football games, I don't recall my brother ever bothering to watch television in those days. My sister didn't watch much more. I suppose I took my cue from them—sitting in front of the tube was only an occasional activity. There were too many neat things to do. I didn't find it especially entertaining, either. We were fortunate enough to have had a mother who read to us when we were young. I think it provided the ultimate sense of security and fantasy—snuggled in bed, listening to your mom read a tale of derring-do, and creating mental images that were neither confined nor constrained by the limits of a camera. I can remember time and time again fighting sleep and pleading for Mom to read one more page.

A not-distant second were radio programs. My brother, sister, and I would pile in the same bed, and over the airwaves in the dark room came *The Shadow*, *Boston Blackie*, *The Green Hornet*, *Red Ryder*, *The Six Shooter*, *Hopalong Cassidy*, *The Falcon*, *Nero Wolf*, *The Challenge of the Yukon*, *Philip Marlow*, *The Whistler*, *Suspense*, *Johnny Dollar*, *Dragnet*, *Sam Spade*, and dozens of others. This, too, was the theater of the mind. There were no limitations. Your imagination knew no constraints. Moreover, there were few and only brief commercial interruptions. Most radio programs had only one sponsor. *The Whistler* was "brought to you by Signal Oil." This especially struck home to us. Signal Oil was everywhere in Southern California in the 50's. The company's crude came from one of the greatest strikes in California history, the oil and natural gas that lay under Signal Hill, next door to Long Beach where some of our cousins lived. The long drive from the Palisades down the Coast Highway—there was no freeway then—to Long Beach took us by one yellow and black Signal Oil gas station after another. If a "gas war" was on, the price

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was 19.9¢ for ethyl and 16.9¢ for regular.

With television, the two one-minute commercial interruptions of a half-hour program by one sponsor became four or five, then six or seven, then seven or eight minutes of interruptions by several different advertisers. Production for television was far more expensive than that for radio, and the demand for advertising revenue increased exponentially. Somehow, people have been trained to accept regular and lengthy interruptions of programs. A half-hour show has only 22 or 23 minutes of air time. A sixty-minute football game has become a three-hour endurance contest, not for the players but for the viewers. A typical game is now regularly interrupted for two or three minutes of commercials. How anyone can sit through this, I cannot fathom.

By the mid-1950's television had mostly replaced radio and reading as evening activities in the homes of Americans. There were still good radio programs being produced—*Yours Truly, Johnny Dollar* with Bob Bailey was one of them—but for the most part the best writers and actors were now working in television for money far greater than ever dreamed of in radio. To me radio and reading went together. In both, the mind and the imagination are active. Conversely, television induced a kind of hypnotic stupor and passivity. Marijuana-smoking kids sit and watch television but do not read. Neither could they follow a radio program.

Today, the television is on for more than five hours daily in the average white household in America. For black families the average is closer to seven hours. It is not by accident that SAT scores peaked in 1963 and have declined ever since, so much so that the scoring has been readjusted several times. It is also not by accident that when graduating college seniors were given standardized tests in 2003, which had been administered to high-school seniors in 1953, the college wizards of the 21st century only marginally outperformed the high-school kids of a half-century earlier.

Some look back upon the 1950's as the golden age of television. Although there was fine work produced for television, most of it was formulaic inanity. I suspect one element in the destruction of the Western as a genre for movies was the many TV Westerns. Most of them were sanitized versions of morality plays with little or nothing to do with the real Old West. Indians, Mexicans, and Chinese were always portrayed not only as victims of white injustice but patient, persevering, humble, honorable, and stoic. They were just like the best of us—except they were perfect. The bad guys were nearly always white. The heroes were nearly always white, too, but their actions portrayed as virtuous often smacked of political correctness. These characters were, after all, creations of Hollywood writers, who frequently were leftists with political and social agendas.

Nonetheless, formulaic inanity and political correctness were not the principal problems with the new electronic beast. The medium itself was the chief offender. It sat in the living room, and increasingly in the dining room and the bedroom, and was on for hours every day and night. Reflection and critical thinking, which are concomitants of reading, were replaced with a passive absorption of whatever images flashed on the screen. Leftist political messages were a part of that, but more insidious were the ever-increasing number of commercials. From infancy Americans were now being trained, almost programmed, to become consumers. How could they not? By the early 1960's Americans were watching several hours of advertisements each week. Since then it has only grown worse. The result is an entire population of Americans who can never have enough of what they do not need.

When my daughter was an infant, we disconnected the television. It stayed that way for 20 years. She never missed it and never asked for the latest must-have item for Christmas. For us in the 50's, who had the fortune of having watched very little TV in our formative years, it was the same. We did not demand a dozen new toys, all with a particular brand name, or, especially for girls, designer-label clothes. Nor did we demand "snack foods" as a nightly supplement. Watching television and consuming food—not to satisfy hunger but to stave off boredom and to pacify desires stimulated by advertisements—has become a pastime. Snack foods are an industry. I remember when it was torture to have to interrupt play during summer evenings to come home to eat dinner. As soon as I gobbled down whatever my mother determined was the irreducible minimum—in a race against the setting sun—it was back out to play. We were not fat. The few who were stood out prominently and were called "fats" or "porky" or "tubby." Most adults were lean, too. I always think of this when I see World War II documentary footage about life on the home front. A shot of workers leaving an aircraft plant at closing time comes to mind; they are lean to a man—and a woman.

I suppose, though, that it is the fat between the ears we should be most concerned about. In the 50's we thought the greatest threat to our existence as a people and a nation came from nuclear weapons. We were in the Atomic Age. We schoolkids practiced the nuclear-attack drill, diving under our desks and curling up like a pill bug. We were also, although no one thought to acknowledge it, in the Age of Television, which was a less palpable but more insidious threat. Reasoning, abstract thinking, critical analysis, and mental computation were being replaced by emotions evoked by visual imagery. The ability to focus one's attention for long periods of time was reduced.

Television is not the only culprit, but it is difficult to imagine today, after more than a half-century of having the beast in our homes, Americans following, with rapt attention, the Lincoln-Douglas debates of 1858. Perhaps we could have in 1958, but certainly not in 2008. Each debate went on for hours, with audiences, by all reports, hanging on each word. The argumentation was often subtle, laced with references, allusion, irony, and metaphor. Yet Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas were simply commu-

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nicating with and trying to win the support of the folks of Illinois—farmers, shopkeepers, blacksmiths, teamsters, butchers, and the like—not an intellectual elite. Imagine one of our presidential candidates opening a debate as did Douglas at Ottawa, in the first of the rhetorical duels:

> Ladies and Gentlemen: I appear before you to-day for purpose of discussing the leading political topics which now agitate the public mind. By an arrangement between Mr. Lincoln and myself, we are present here to-day for the purpose of having a joint discussion, as the representatives of the two great political parties of the State and Union, upon the principles in issue between those parties, and this vast concourse of people shows the deep feeling which pervades the public mind in regard to the questions dividing us.

Lincoln and Douglas traveled the length and breadth of Illinois to debate on seven occasions. Thousands of people gathered each time to listen and critique, often standing for hours in heat and humidity and, occasionally, in rain showers. Many understood that, although the contest was for the Senate seat from Illinois, the race had larger implications. "As I view the contest," wrote a farmer to Lincoln, "it is no less than a contest for the advancement of the kingdom of Heaven or the Kingdom of Satan—a contest for an advance or a retrograde in civilization—and the fate of Douglas or Lincoln is comparatively a trifle."

Today, television directors keep the average length of a shot on network programs under four seconds. The eye, unlike the mind, is quickly satisfied. Images produce emotional responses. Analysis is suspended. This has always been excused by claiming that most television programing aims for nothing more than "entertainment." That is exactly the problem I have with the medium, with what television has done to the American mind. It seems that many Americans find such banality entertaining. They do not demand more intellectual stimulation. They do not crave more. They do not need more.

In 1957 Ken Nordine released an album titled *Word Jazz*. It remains a brilliant, insightful, and innovative work—and very funny. One of the cuts on the album was about a television viewer who had become addicted to the medium, staring at the screen day and night. He had become a *videite*. Within minutes of turning off the tube, he experienced the onset of withdrawal symptoms. They finally became so painful that he reached for the knob, and, with the twist of the wrist and the hum of the TV warming up, he felt relief. Nordine's comedic sketch was kidding on the square. Television is a narcotic. The DEA should consider classifying it as a Schedule III drug.

Nonetheless, the greatest problem is not the endless hours the average American spends in front of the tube—it is the consequence of those hours of viewing. I think most television programming reduces the ability of people to think logically and critically. Moreover, the conditioning of Americans to television watching and, ultimately, the creation of videites forces the rest of society to act like television. Church services, especially in many of the megachurches, resemble a television broadcast. Screens drop down, images appear, lights flash, ministers perform. I suppose Television Age preachers feel they have to deliver the Word in such a manner. They have an hour or two on Sunday to compete with and undo the more than 35 hours of television each parishioner has watched during the week. Since these services now look like television, perhaps the competition has long since ended. Theology, ritual, the Sacraments, dogma, and tradition have given way to showbiz.

Today, the television is on for more than five hours daily in the average white household in America. For black families the average is closer to seven hours. It is not by accident that SAT scores peaked in 1963 and have declined ever since, so much so that the scoring has been readjusted several times. It is also not by accident that when graduating college seniors were given standardized tests in 2003, which had been administered to high-school seniors in 1953, the college wizards of the 21st century only marginally outperformed the high-school kids of a half-century earlier.

Even printed matter now resembles television. *USA Today* has a far greater circulation than any other newspaper in America. Its secret to success: paragraph-length stories, photos, color, graphics, and everything else to stimulate the senses and reduce the need for attention span. Meanwhile, general newspaper circulation in the United States has steadily declined from a peak of 63 million during the early 1980's. With a population now estimated at 300 million, daily newspaper circulation is 50 million. In 1950, with a population half of today's, daily newspaper circulation was 55 million. We were a nation of readers.

Writing in the late 1940's, George Orwell feared that future authoritarian regimes would ban books and censor printed matter. He assumed that people would still be reading when Big Brother's totalitarian hammer crashed down upon the presses and government revisionists began rewriting history. It seems there will be no need for this. The Winston Smiths of the future will not be able to read or to read enough to analyze and reflect upon anything of substance. Their opinions will be the product of emotions manufactured by televised images and clever soundbites, rather than something derived from critical thinking and sober judgment. When TV arrived in our homes in the 50's, little did we suspect that the technological novelty would lead to this. ◁

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Alfred Hitchcock's Empty Suit

50's Counterculture

by George McCartney

In 1939, a short, fat Englishman named Alfred Hitchcock arrived in Hollywood at the invitation of David Selznick. Impressed by Hitchcock's work in British film, Selznick thought he would be perfect to direct *Rebecca*, starring Laurence Olivier and Joan Fontaine. Things did not go well. Selznick was among the most overbearing of Hollywood producers. He thought himself more aesthetically competent than anyone he paid. As far as he was concerned, Hitchcock was hired help, and Selznick naturally expected to oversee his every move. Needless to say, the soft-spoken, gentlemanly Brit was appalled.

Although Hitchcock thought Selznick's "suggestions" ruined his filming of Daphne du Maurier's novel, *Rebecca* succeeded commercially, and in Hollywood that was all that mattered. So Hitchcock labored on, often unhappily, under Selznick's ever-watchful eye until he had built a reputation that allowed him to become his own producer. By 1948, at last free of Selznick, Hitchcock began to make films on his own terms, and he changed what Americans thought movies could be. He won a popularity that rivaled even Walt Disney's. And yet his films had none of the original Mouseketeer's syrupy reassurance. In fact, Hitchcock's work had become the prescribed antidote for the indigestible surfeit of saccharine self-congratulation force-fed to the nation following the hardships of the Depression and World War II. From every side, especially television, Americans were being told that their country had become an unprecedented success story. Opportunity was no longer around the corner but here and now. Everyone had everything necessary to modern life—cars, refrigerators, televisions, even college degrees. And those that did not were assured they would rather soon. Of course, there was a price. You had to play by the rules, or at least seem to. This meant smiling a lot to signal you were a team player. Do that, and all would be well.

Hitchcock, a Jesuit-trained Roman Catholic, demurred from this prescribed ethic of compulsory cheer. In film after film, and week after week on his television show, he quietly questioned America's heady optimism, drolly reminding his audience of the human capacity for duplicity, cowardice, and mayhem. There was no moral hectoring, however; he preferred indirection. Irony was his mode, and he wielded it to devastating effect. Under the guise of a simple entertainer, he held up a mirror in which his adoptive compatriots could behold some unflattering truths about themselves. Most of all, he left the attentive members of his audience disturbed, their certain certainties thoroughly knocked about.

Hitchcock owned the 50's screen. Even his few critical failures had compelling moments that far surpassed anything else Hollywood was offering. He found means to reach into his audience and roil their self-flattering dreams. In 1954 he adapted a conventional murder-mystery play, *Dial M for Murder*, shooting it in a three-dimensional glass-wearing format. Some theaters showed it in 3-D, others flat. Both formats did well at the box office. Few would talk about this film today, however, were it not for its signature Hitchcock moment. This comes when Grace Kelly, the spoiled, adulterous wife of Ray Milland, is attacked by Swan, the would-be murderer the cuckolded hubby has hired to dispose of her. Sneaking into her apartment, Swan wraps a nylon stocking around Kelly's lovely neck and begins to throttle the life out of her. But Kelly will not go quietly. As we watch the struggling pair from behind, she bends back across a desk, reaching with her right arm seemingly into the audience, scrabbling about for something with which to defend herself. Finally, her fingers fall upon a pair of shears. Once she has them, her fully extended arm comes over her assailant's shoulder in one swift arcing motion and plunges a scissor blade into his back. The man rears up spasmodically, futilely clawing at his back. He then falls onto the blade, driving it even deeper into his flesh. The shock of this moment has nothing to do with blood or gore. Instead, we are profoundly unsettled by having joined this elegant woman in delivering the death blow to the intruder. It is as though we provided her with the weapon. This effect is especially pronounced when the film is seen in its original 3-D format. Hitchcock took sly advantage of this 1950's gimmick, demonstrating once more that he was ready to exploit his medium's every resource. The murder scene is the only one in which he allowed anything to project from the screen, and that it is Kelly's lovely arm he chose to put under our noses makes the murder feel all the grislier. While we might suppose we would be gratified by her triumph, we are not. Yes, she's still breathing, and her assailant is not, but we are left shaken nevertheless. Her counterattack has been executed with the same cool aplomb she has displayed while cheating on her husband, an indiscretion she has tried to cover with easy lies. We cannot help feeling that, had she been an honest wife, all this would have been unnecessary. The Grace Kellys

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of Hollywood's pantheon were not supposed to begrime themselves in such sordid doings.

Hitchcock came to be known as the "master of suspense," and indeed he was. But suspense was really a byproduct of his true calling. Hitchcock's real *métier* was his ability to disquiet his audience. Few directors have been as successful in producing a squirming unease in their viewers. He achieved this by dislodging his audience from their voyeuristic position in the theater's darkened auditorium. *So*, he seems to say, *you've come to watch people grapple with the consequences of their misbehavior. Well, why should I permit you to look on from the comfortable detachment of your theater seat? It's only fair that you feel these consequences also.*

In Hitchcock films, this strategy has special clout because the characters indulging in betrayal and mayhem are played by such beautiful people. However she conducted herself in the real world, in the 50's the celluloid Grace Kelly was supposed to remain ever incorrupt. Hitchcock enjoyed subverting this movie convention. He worked with the best-looking film actors America had to offer, often making them do things that were unforgivable. Cary Grant once boasted he had never played a heavy, but that is flatly untrue. In his Hitchcock films, Grant was a shadier character than his polished persona suggested elsewhere. In *Notorious* (1946), Hitchcock had Grant play an American intelligence agent who callously uses Ingrid Bergman to undo a Nazi agent, played by Claude Rains. After romancing Bergman himself, Grant coerces her to seduce and even to marry Rains in order to frustrate his espionage operation and compromise him in front of his colleagues into the bargain. At the film's conclusion, Rains, who genuinely loves Bergman, allows Grant to rescue her from his home in front of his Nazi colleagues, thus putting his life in jeopardy. When he begs to leave with his wife, however, Grant coldly refuses to save him.

Hitchcock's most disquieting theme was the notion that Americans lacked a moral center, that they had somehow lost their essential decency. This is Grant's condition in *North by Northwest*, the gaudy, surreal comedy Hitchcock made in 1959. Despite his mid-Atlantic, cockney-flavored accent, Grant stars as the perfect upper-middle-class American male. He is the exquisitely tailored Roger Thornhill, suave advertising executive who through a series of preposterous misunderstandings finds himself a murder suspect. Trying to elude the police, he takes a train on which he meets the mysterious Eve Kendall (Eva Marie Saint). Despite the brevity of their acquaintance, she begins to flirt with him in the dining car, announcing in so many words that she is entirely available. Thornhill returns her advances with knowing looks, his expression registering his smug conviction that he is simply irresistible to women. *Well, after all, I'm Cary Grant*, he seems about to say. Even so, he feels compelled to ask her: Why so impetuous?

She replies airily, "It's going to be a long night, and I don't particularly like the book I've started. Know what I mean?"

With a coy *moue*, he pretends to consider. "Now, let me think. . . . Yes, I know exactly what you mean." She then takes out a cigarette, and, in the prescribed movie code of an era as yet untroubled by our current antitobacco fervor, he dutifully produces a book of matches. The flirtation is about to ignite. But then his matchbook gives Eve pause. It bears his initials, ROT, Roger O. Thornhill. Anticipating her question, he explains with a smirk, "My trademark. Rot."

"What does the *O* stand for?" she asks.

"Nothing," he breezily replies. There has been speculation that this was Hitchcock's payback to Selznick, who was supposed to have invented a middle name for himself so he could sign his contracts more grandly as David O. Selznick. True or not, it certainly fits the self-promoting character of Thornhill. He has had his *O* made much bigger than the *R* and *T*, apparently thinking the zero in the middle of his identity an achievement—as, indeed, it is. He is a man who takes pride in his own vacuity. There is no center to him, no loyalties. He has been divorced twice and now dates a woman with whom he casually breaks dates, sending her, by way of apology, coin-shaped candy wrapped in gold foil. "She'll like that; she'll think she's eating money," he tells his secretary. He is also a consummate liar. He steals a cab from one bewildered man, claiming the secretary he has in tow is deathly sick. When this robust young lady chastises him for practicing such obvious deceit, he responds, "Ah, Maggie, in the world of advertising there's no such thing as a lie; there's only the expedient exaggeration." He is all surface charm and no ethical center, and he likes it that way—until his moral absence transmutes into a surprising presence.

Foreign spies have mistaken him for George Kaplan, a fictitious American intelligence agent invented by American counterspies to throw the foreign spies off the trail of their real agent, which explains how Thornhill comes to meet the real agent—who, it turns out, is Eve Kendall, who is pretending to be in cahoots with the foreign spies and is now using her charms to mislead Thornhill. Got that? So convinced that Thornhill must be Kaplan, the enemy spies kidnap him. When Thornhill later escapes, he goes to Kaplan's room, which is, naturally, at the Plaza Hotel. (The real Cary Grant—if there was a real Cary Grant—had a permanent room in this swankest of New York establishments.) Thornhill feels compelled to confront this phantom who has caused him so much trouble. Finding Kaplan out, he bribes his mother to wangle the key to Kaplan's room from the desk clerk. (Yes, his mother, who also expects her 55-year-old boy-man home for dinner.) Once in the room, Thornhill tries on one of the fake Kaplan's suits thoughtfully hung in the closet by detail-oriented American intelligence agents. Is there some weird resemblance between them, Thornhill wonders? But, no, these suits were made for a much shorter man. Through the first half of the film, Thornhill will pursue the decoy Kaplan while

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the enemy agents chase him, the Kaplan of their suspicious imaginations. Setting these shenanigans in motion is the Professor (a wonderfully imperturbable Leo G. Carroll), the head of a CIA-type organization. "We're all in the same alphabet soup," he explains.

No, the plot does not make sense. But the imagery does. As a man with a zero in the middle of his name, it is fitting that Thornhill should chase his own shrunken identity from New York to Rapid City, South Dakota, where he is forced to confront the iconic identities of the four presidents carved on Mount Rushmore. While he and the Professor impersonate sightseers at the Rushmore observation deck, these unamused paternal presences seem to frown on Thornhill's lack of all conviction. "I don't like the way Teddy Roosevelt is looking at me," he complains.

Melanie Anderson

Under the noses of Washington, Jefferson, Roosevelt, and Lincoln, Thornhill is forced to confront the rot of his own existence as an American boy-man doted on by women while he eludes responsibility at every turn. He is a madcap north-by-northwest Hamlet too lacking in direction for his showdown with Claudius, here appropriately renamed Vandamm (James Mason), the leader of the enemy spy operation. As he did with other performers, Hitchcock draws upon Grant's image and biography to develop his point. Born Archie Leach in Bristol, England, Grant was a Gatsby figure. Trying to make a career in his early 20's in America, he set about to reinvent himself. "I pretended to be somebody I wanted to be and I finally became that person; or he became me," Grant once explained. In his later years—with rueful self-awareness, one imagines—he famously remarked on this Platonic conception he had made of himself: "Everybody wants to be Cary Grant, even I want to be Cary Grant." So Grant, so Thornhill. He is not a person but a collection of mannerisms gathered into a sleek bespoke suit. In fact, he is Hitchcock's anticipation of that pejorative term that became so popular 20 years after the film's release. Thornhill is the original empty suit.

I am one of the club who maintains that Thornhill's suit should have been given second billing. It is a light, silver-gray affair, seemingly indestructible despite its gossamer drape. It is Thornhill's modern armor. Even an attacking crop-duster can barely wrinkle it. It does not lose its crease until the portentously named Eve trifles with its occupant. At last, Thornhill discovers Eve is a Cold War pawn wielded by both the Professor and Vandamm. She had been forced to deceive him to conceal her patriotic identity. It is then that he ditches his decorative armor for simpler apparel and goes about rescuing her from Vandamm's Mount Rushmore redoubt. (How perfectly 50's to suppose America's enemies would own a sort of aluminum-beamed Bauhaus home on top of those presidential brows! Calling Joe McCarthy!) Thornhill and Eve escape by scrabbling across Rushmore's forbidding presidential mugs. Doing so, Thornhill regains his agile identity against their stony but, one hopes, approving regard. While hanging perilously from the monument, Eve sensibly asks him why his wives divorced him. "I think they said I led too dull a life," he replies. A few moments later, she slips, and he catches her by the hand. As he pulls her to safety, the film cuts to a Pullman car, where Thornhill is hoisting the smiling Eve into the upper berth. Between Rushmore and the train, she has become Mrs. Thornhill, and, we are to suppose, Thornhill has become for once an authentic man capable of committing himself in sickness and in health to the woman he loves. There is another cut, and we watch the train plunge into a mountainside tunnel. A consummation devoutly to be wished.

Not all of Hitchcock's empty suits fare so well. Consider *Vertigo*, released a year before *Northwest*. It leaves in its wake an irremediable disquiet. Here, Hitchcock's mockery of the empty suit became its bleakest and, by several accounts, most personal. The story concerns obsession with commercialized romantic love. Scottie Ferguson (Jimmy Stewart) is a detective forced into retirement by his vertigo. When an old university friend, Gavin Elster, asks him to tail his wife, Madeleine (Kim Novak), to find out what's behind her suicidal tendencies, he reluctantly agrees. When he sees Madeleine, however, he is almost immediately smitten. She is a portrait of the kind, upper-middle-class glamour to be found in the pages of *Vogue* and wears a signature suit the same shade of lustrous gray that Grant wears in *Northwest*. As Madeleine, Novak is quite beautiful but rather vacant, as if she were lost in a dream, which she is. Only it is not her dream but the one Scottie shares with untold millions of 50's men: the dream of a compliant yet demure and classy version of Marilyn Monroe. In fact, Madeleine's a fraud. She is really Judy Barton, the working-class girl Elster has remade to resemble his wife. He intends to murder his wealthy spouse and needs a plausible suicide scenario to get away with it. Hence, Judy and Scottie: She will impersonate Madeleine, and Scottie will witness her "suicide."

Hitchcock took direct responsibility for Novak's clothing and coiffure, giving her the look and manner of a prized American woman of the time. She is blonde beyond

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blonde, her hair subtly incandescent and done up in a French twist with an enigmatic little curl at the back of her neck that matches the one in a painting of her supposed ancestor, the 19th-century suicide Carlotta on whom she is fixated. The curl becomes a trope echoing the series of animated spirals that open the film and reappear in Scottie's dreams, suggesting his vertigo while harboring a discreetly vaginal hint at their oval centers. This reinforces Madeleine as the vertiginous hollow center of the movie. She is a sexual lure devoid of a genuine personality who leads Scottie to play his part in Elster's scheme. The deception works splendidly for Elster. Madeleine's pretense that she is haunted by her ancestor leads Scottie to take her to the mission church she says appears in her dreams. Once there, Madeleine breaks from Scottie's protective embrace and runs up the mission tower, knowing his vertigo will make it impossible for him to follow. In the tower, Elster is waiting with the body of his wife. Once Judy reaches him, he throws the real Madeleine to the chapel's roof below, and Scottie becomes the desolate witness to the supposed death of the woman he has come to love.

The real drama of the film is not the staged murder but Scottie's obsession with the impersonated Madeleine. She becomes his perfect woman. When, after the faked suicide, he accidentally meets Judy, now a gum-chewing brunette wearing a too-tight working-class sweater, he is compelled to transform her into Madeleine. She submits to his wishes, willing to forgo her safety and even her own personhood to be with him again. It is a perverse but hardly new representation of romantic love as inherently murderous of authenticity. By calling forth the fake Madeleine from the real Judy, Scottie eerily repeats what Elster had done to her. This must be one of the strangest and saddest sequences in film history. Even as she submits to the makeover, Judy desperately tries to cling to some vestiges of her own personality, but in vain. She agrees to a suit in the same lustrous pearl gray but wants one with a different cut than the fake Madeleine's. But, no, Scottie insists, it must be Madeleine's exactly. She agrees to the hyper-blonde hair color but not fake Madeleine's coiffure. Again she is overruled. Finally, she comes back exactly as Scottie recalls her. Shortly thereafter, however, he detects the ruse when Judy wears one of false Madeleine's necklaces. He takes Judy back to the tower saying he must lay the ghost of the past. There at the top of the tower, he confronts her with his knowledge, and she pleads to be forgiven, pointing out that she could have easily eluded him by simply going away after their chance meeting. She did not because she loves him and hopes he can love her again. But Scottie is lost in his obsession. "There's no bringing her back," he says with anguished desolation and then bizarrely addresses Judy with reproach. "Madeleine, I loved you so," he nearly sobs.

Vertigo is Hitchcock's grim essay on romantic love. With the flesh-and-blood Judy before him, Scottie still longs for the imaginary Madeleine. Better the unobtainable ideal than the too-available actual. And then, for a moment, it seems as if the ideal has returned after all. A hatch opens and a dark figure—Madeleine's ghost?—steps onto the tower's deck. No, it is a nun from the mission. Before Judy recognizes this, however, she recoils as if from an apparition and falls to her death As so often happens, the dream slaughters the reality.

Of course, Scottie could have avoided his fate. Midge (Barbara Bel Geddes, never simpler and never lovelier), the woman who genuinely loves him, had provided him with all the information he needed. Early in the film, Scottie visits her apartment, where she works as an illustrator. She is drawing a picture of a strapless bra hung up on a modeling stand. Scottie asks, "What's this doohickey?"

She replies, "It's a brassiere. You know about those things. You're a big boy now. Works on the principle of the cantilever bridge. . . . An aircraft engineer . . . designed it."

This is Hitchcock's little joke on Howard Hughes, who had designed just such a "revolutionary uplift" bra for his next big star, the exceptionally pneumatic Jane Russell. There is more to it, however. Hitchcock wittily calls attention to how women collaborate with big-boy desire, molding themselves so they can flaunt their breasts before susceptible men. It is all part of the commercial packaging of desire, a pleasing illusion with sometimes untoward consequences. Later, after Midge has found out about Scottie's interest in Madeleine and her supposed fixation on a painting of her 19th-century ancestor, she paints a picture of the romantic Carlotta and puts her own very 50's head on the body. When she shows it to Scottie, he is nearly dumbstruck. Midge's large framed glasses, practical pageboy hairdo, and frank, knowing smile all mock Scottie's obsession. There is nothing dreamy or vacant about her painting, nothing that needs completing by him. This woman is not an image to be possessed and adored but an independent, self-sufficient person. Everything about Midge works to demystify romance. And yet she looks remarkably like the exotic Madeleine—she is blonde, although not in Madeleine's supernova shade, and her proportions are similar, although they haven't been given the subtle uplift of a revolutionary bra and poured into a pearl-gray suit. As such, Midge is not at all what Scottie wants. He wants an illusion created by aircraft engineers who dabble in moviemaking. He wants the packaged ideal, a perfection impossible to attain. In short, he wants the empty suit. It is a longing that has doomed him—and many others—to eternal dissatisfaction, if not madness.

To this day I marvel that Hitchcock gained such popularity in the optimistic 50's. That an artist with a vision so dour, so disquieting, could have found welcome in this period is cause for hope. We weren't completely Disneyfied after all. Of course, Hitchcock had art on his side. Had he said directly what his films imply, he might have been deported *tout suite* with his recklessly didactic countryman Charlie Chaplin. ©

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The Burmese Tragedy

Foreign Hindrance, Not Aid

by Doug Bandow

Even before being devastated by a killer cyclone on May 2, Burma was one of the world's poorest countries. Renamed Myanmar by a military junta, Burma is also one of the most oppressed countries. In terms of brutality, cruelty, and venality, her government is in a league with North Korea. It comes as no surprise, then, that sending foreign aid to Burma has the potential of doing more harm than good.

Over the last 60 years, trillions of dollars have been transferred from poor people in rich countries to rich people in poor countries in the name of promoting development. Through much of that period, many aid recipients actually lost ground economically. However, assorted presidents, cabinet ministers, managers, and other apparatchiks grew rich. Africa, for instance, gained a distinct new class: the Wabenzi, or men of the Mercedes-Benz.

Over the years, even the U.S. Agency for International Development, World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and other aid agencies have been forced to admit that the vast bulk of their munificent transfers generated no economic growth and encouraged no market reforms. The conclusions of outside analysts, led by the pioneering British economist P.T. Bauer, have been more damning. Bauer's studies showed that, by pouring vast sums of money into many of the world's worst governments, foreign aid has subsidized both socialism and repression.

Foreign aid remains yet another government program in which hope routinely trumps experience. Instead of eliminating failed programs, politicians and aid officials simply add new ones, such as the Millennium Challenge Account. Economist Jeffrey Sachs campaigns to end—not just to alleviate—poverty, as if a few more dollars spent on a few more programs by a few more governments could banish illness, hunger, and most every other human ill.

Although the intellectual and practical cases against foreign aid are impregnable, even many hard-nosed analysts retain a soft spot for humanitarian assistance. Forget trying to fix economies, reform policies, maintain roads, and create businesses. What about saving people who are starving, ill, or otherwise at risk? Such noble efforts are often no more than cleverly disguised government subsidy schemes. U.S. "Food for Peace" shipments to both Latin America and Asia, for example, were essentially an international ploy to unload domestic farm surpluses. The program earned a reputation for ruining local farmers and, in turn, making more people dependent on foreign largesse.

So long as aid—whether money or goods—goes through a government, or something acting as a government, its efficacy depends on the character of that government. In Somalia, for instance, food aid became a weapon of war. Concerning Western humanitarian assistance, relief worker Michael Maren complained that

> the relief program was probably killing as many people as it was saving, and the net result was that Somali soldiers were supplementing their income by selling food, while the [guerrilla group]—often indistinguishable from the army—was using the food as rations to fuel their attacks into Ethiopia.

Even where aid actually gets to the needy, it may still buttress the oppressive system that is responsible for much or most of the people's distress. This was the dilemma with the Ethiopian famine a quarter-century ago and the North Korean famine a decade ago. In both cases, a monstrous regime was able to entrench itself in power, guaranteeing future murder, destruction, and hardship.

Burma suffered a horrid catastrophe, with an estimated 135,000 dead or missing, and another 2.4 million left homeless. In response, Western aid agencies quickly offered their assistance: France and the United States even dispatched warships filled with food, medicine, and other supplies, as well as personnel to oversee their distribution. This relief model—the sort of direct aid to the needy used after the devastating 2005 tsunami—is about the only one likely to work. Naturally, the generals in Naypyidaw, the new capital built at the insistence of army chief Than Shwe, said no.

Their decision was not entirely surprising. After all, the people's welfare has never been a high priority of the so-called State Peace and Development Council (SPDC). For decades the Burmese military has been killing and raping, impressing farmers as porters, destroying villages, and sowing land mines throughout the eastern hill country. Democratic activists in the cities face prison. Demon-

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strators last fall were brutally dispersed. So what if a few people are killed by a natural disaster?

SPDC generals were suspicious of aid agencies, which they saw as representatives of governments determined to drive them from power. The junta was wary of the U.S. military in particular, fearing a clandestine attempt at "regime change." Thus, the regime offered to accept assistance but not aid workers—and certainly not any military personnel. (Almost a month after the cyclone hit, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates finally seemed to get the point, admitting that it was "becoming pretty clear" that the SPDC would not allow the four U.S. Navy ships waiting offshore to dock.)

As weeks went by, the junta issued more visas and reduced restrictions on foreign staffers, leading to a modest inflow of people, food, and other assistance. Yet at almost every turn, the junta continued to exacerbate the crisis. For instance, after being allowed into the country, aid workers often were prevented from reaching the neediest people in the remotest villages. Even some native Burmese were turned back at roadblocks. The military confiscated the supplies of others or forced them to pay bribes to continue on their way. Workers active with the opposition risked arrest and impoundment of their cars.

The military's interference spread well beyond the hard-hit Irrawaddy delta, as hungry troops seized money and food from villages in the north. "They've started grabbing food for themselves because they are scared there will not be enough food left," explained Debbie Stothard of the Bangkok-based human-rights organization ALTSEAN. Weeks after the disaster, basic relief supplies had not reached more than a million people, yet the government began emptying its inadequate camps, ordering families to return to wrecked villages without food or other supplies. One victim told the *Financial Times* that a local bureaucrat simply declared that "there must be no refugees in this country and we must reconstruct our homes." The regime was equally insistent that displaced people leave Buddhist monasteries, where many had taken refuge, as well as makeshift shelters along roads where they had a better chance of receiving charitable assistance.

The government also turned the aid business into a cash cow. Foreign agencies had to pay up to $3,000 per cell phone. In a country where gasoline is rationed and auto imports are limited, everything costs more. One retired teacher told the *New York Times*, "The people get nothing here, and the military takes everything."

Immediately after the cyclone hit, when aid from neighboring Thailand arrived, soldiers stuck labels with the names of leading generals onto the packages before distributing them. There was evidence that assistance had been diverted; donated high-energy biscuits were replaced by cheaper domestic crackers. Moreover, reported the *New York Times*, "some of the international aid arriving into the country for the victims of Cyclone Nargis was being stolen, diverted or warehoused by the country's army."

By the end of May, the SPDC declared that disaster relief was finished, so the West should hand over $11 billion for reconstruction. Deputy Defense Minister Aye Myint told a donors' forum in Singapore, "We would warmly welcome any assistance and aid which are provided with genuine goodwill from any country or organization, provided that there are no strings attached, or politicization involved." He added, "We are ready to accept [assistance] in accordance with our priorities."

Those priorities are obvious. As Thai analyst Aung Naing Oo explained, "when you are in a position of power within the military, you can enrich yourself easily." The families and friends of the generals are wealthy, and now they will grow even richer. In mid-May the regime assigned 43 companies, many linked to top military figures, to receive reconstruction contracts. In a country with an estimated GDP of only $15 billion, a little largesse can go a long way to expand private bank accounts.

Win Min, a Burmese academic exiled in Thailand, adds that "This is a very paternalistic regime. They want people to rely on them, depend on them. That is why they don't want other people to distribute food—it will undermine their legitimacy."

Fortunately, potential donors balked at this attempted shakedown, leading to regime denunciations of Western stinginess and "inhumanity." The junta was particularly outraged that the World Bank refused to send cash since Burma was a deadbeat borrower, having welshed on her obligations a decade before.

Nevertheless, there was more than a little chatter within the professional aid community about the need to put politics aside, take the junta as it is, and find areas of cooperation. One official anonymously declared to the *Financial Times*, "More progress has been made in the last three weeks than in the last ten years. It's a highly encouraging sign—but it could stop tomorrow. Now there needs to be a lot of little steps," after which "we can start to believe that what we hope is possible is actually possible."

This is a dangerous delusion. Just meeting with SPDC officials to talk about assistance and treating them as equals worried one Western diplomat, who warned that "There's a risk that the international community has handed the junta a propaganda victory, coming to the city and pledging aid without exacting much in exchange." And shoveling money into a system controlled by the corrupt autocrats who have kept Burma poor for decades would be a prescription for continued failure. Whatever the short-term benefits for cyclone survivors, the long-term price paid by the Burmese people likely would be far greater.

The poor we will have with us always, Christ taught. Those of us who have much should help those who suffer with little, but we must be wise as well as compassionate. Painful experience should have taught us that foreign aid has more often proved to be foreign hindrance. Why treat Burma as an exception to the rule?

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by Taki Theodoracopulos

No More Girls in Bikinis

Just after the Berlin wall came down, I flew to Berlin with my German-Austrian wife and traveled around the city and its eastern parts. On visiting the Olympic stadium I told the taxi driver that my uncle, a hurdler, was the first athlete the Führer's gaze fell upon as the parade of the 1936 games began, because we Greeks always go in first, having started the games back in 776 B.C., and because my uncle was the flag carrier. The taxi driver did not seem impressed in the least.

It might seem politically incorrect to say this, but the Berlin Olympics were the best ever staged, the last time white American and European men and women competed on an equal level with blacks, despite the great feat of Jesse Owens in winning four gold medals. The first games after the war, the 1948 London Olympics, were a festival for pure amateurs, as were the Helsinki and Melbourne games that followed. The best postwar Olympics were the Rome ones (1960). Europe had rebounded from the catastrophe of World War II, and Germany had been invited to compete. I remember them well. The crown prince of Greece, now ex-King Constantine, won a gold in the dragon-class sailing in the bay of Naples. Ari Onassis, the original Greek tycoon, came into the shower room where the prince was cleaning up after he and his crew had been dunked into the filthy waters of Naples—my father was crewing for him—and got into the shower fully clothed, kissing the prince and congratulating him. That night there was a great ball in the palazzo of the duke of Serra di Cassano, with most of Europe's reigning royals attending. For a 23-year-old, it was quite impressive stuff.

On the field, a blond German, Armin Hary, won the 100-meter dash, the first non-American to win the most prestigious of events since 1928, and an Italian, Livio Berutti, won the 200 meters. The Roma stadium went wild as the Italian led from the start, chased by three African-Americans. Three white American hurdlers came one, two, three in the 400-meter hurdles, led by Glenn Davis, and a young Cassius Clay won the light-heavyweight title in the Palazzetto dello Sport, although an Australian friend of mine by the name of Madigan almost beat him—I was certain he had won—in the semifinal. The grand finale was the Marathon, won by a barefooted Ethiopian sergeant, Abebe Bekila, who smiled all along the route leading into the Borghese gardens and down the Via Veneto, and who rightly received the greatest cheers from the crowd.

The Rome Olympics were my last, although I did attend the judo competition in Athens in 2004. The games became much too big after Rome, much too politicized, and drugs began to play a much too important role. The Cold War saw nation-by-nation medal counts, although counting was against the spirit of the games. In 1984 the Los Angeles games became the first Olympics in which corporate sponsors got their filthy hooks in deep, making the event look like one big advertisement. It's been downhill ever since. Athlete after athlete has been caught cheating with drugs, and all records are now suspect, as they well should be. In the 2004 Athens Olympics the Greek government spent $12 billion, five percent of the country's economy. Many of the lavish facilities built so a political party could show off to the world lie empty and unused. In my not-so-humble opinion, the only way to save the games is to do away with them.

To begin with they are much too big and too inclusive. Rhythmic underwater dancing has more to do with entertainment than with sport. Although women's softball has been eliminated, beach volleyball has not. Watching beautifully built women in tiny bikinis playing on sand has more to do with *Playboy* than with what the ancient Greeks had in mind. The games, after all, were started because the ancients believed it made their soldiers fighting fit. A foot race in armor was introduced at the 65th Games in 520 B.C. The other three events were running, wrestling, and the pentathlon, which included running and wrestling as well as the discus, javelin, and jumping. In other words, the games represented real life. No synchronized swimming and certainly no Tae Kwan Do, a phony martial art that resembles touch football. (Contestants wear padding and score points by touching the adversary.) Victors back then were given a simple wreath of olive sprays and the statue and victory poem that would be created in their honor back home. They were considered to be blessed by the gods. No Coca-Cola endorsements, no cornflakes contracts, no Nike sponsorships. Only glory.

So here's *Chronicles'* blueprint to save the bloated, cheating, corporate games: First and foremost they have to return to their original site, Olympia, in the northwest Peloponnese, where their spirit lives on. Shaded by olive, pine, and poplar, scented by oregano and thyme, the games would be restricted to track and field, wrestling, boxing, swimming, and equestrian events. Nothing else. No tennis, no football, no baseball and other invented sports. Greed, corruption, and commercialism would be eliminated at a stroke. Only amateurs need apply. The pros have their own world championships and other drug festivals. The Olympics will remain pure, and the winners will enjoy eternal glory.

I wouldn't hold my breath. ◁

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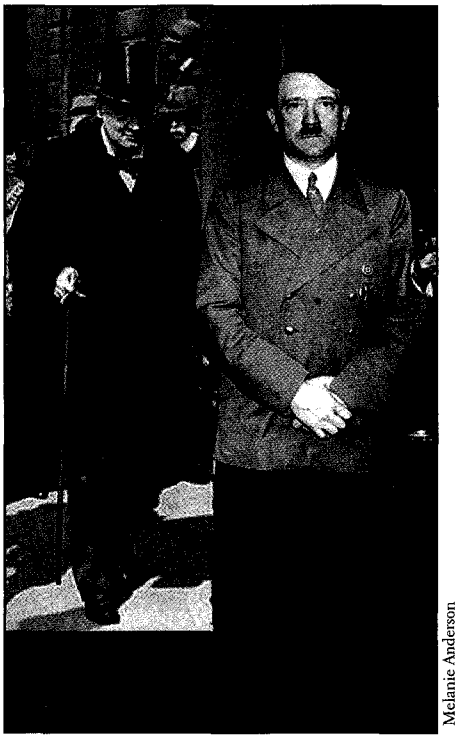
The Necessary Century

by Chilton Williamson, Jr.

"He saith among the trumpets, Ha, Ha! and he smelleth the battle afar off, the thunder of the captains, and the shouting."

—Job 29:25

Churchill, Hitler, and the Unnecessary War: How Britain Lost Its Empire and the West Lost the World
by Patrick J. Buchanan
New York: Crown; 518 pp., $29.95



Melanie Anderson

According to the fashion current in the publishing world today, the title of a book is a bit of catchy fluff, and the subtitle a ponderous, plonking sentence fragment indicating the book's content. In the present instance, both titles are important, and indeed equally important. The title as it stands is an accurate representation of the author's thesis. But a reversal of title and subtitle has an equivalent result. "How Britain Lost Its Empire and the West Lost the World: Churchill, Hitler, and the Unnecessary War," besides being more conventionally catchy, serves equally well to introduce the book. Each title suggests a thesis; and each thesis is complementary to the other and central to Pat Buchanan's purpose. Nevertheless, both theses need to be read, as it were, separately, and weighed in the same manner.

Admirers of Winston Churchill, and at least one prominent reviewer of this book, insist that World War II indeed was a necessary war waged to defeat a great evil even at the expense of collaboration with an evil of equal magnitude. My dictionary defines the word *necessary* as something that is "of an inevitable nature: INESCAPABLE"; "logically unavoidable"; "that cannot be denied without contradiction"; or that which is "determined or produced by the previous condition of things." Nothing, of course, in history is inevitable except the end of it. Nevertheless, I think that the two world wars in the 20th century, and the calamitous results they produced for the West, do suggest, broadly speaking, a degree of inevitability. Mr. Buchanan regards World War I and World War II as the principal causes of the ruin of the Western world. It seems to me that the catastrophic and unprecedented violence of the century's first half were at least as much a symptom of the West's self-destruction as they were its cause. For Western civilization was in process of decline generations before 1914, as the Western nations gradually turned against what Josef Pieper called the sacred tradition that had produced it.

The cultural decadence of the Weimar Republic from which the Third Reich arose was only that of desacralized Western European culture, postwar, in exaggerated form. And Hitlerism itself was both a result and an expression of civilizational decline, which not infrequently has been accompanied (as was the case with the late Roman Republic and the Empire) by social turmoil and political violence. What is more, that decline was scarcely halted by peace in Western Europe since 1945; rather, it has been continuing ever since, and in fact has been accelerated once again by the Muslim invasion of the past couple of decades.

Buchanan describes Churchill as having been by nature a pagan Roman, "a post-Christian man" who exuberantly embraced war in 1914 and again in 1939, and, by air-bombing Westphalia on the night of May 11, 1949 (before he had served 24 hours as prime minister), removed the keystone upholding (in the words of F.J.P. Veale) "the whole structure of civilized warfare as it had been gradually built up in Europe during the preceding two centuries." Yet the same term—

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post-Christian man—may be fairly applied as well to much of the British governing class of the 20th century, including most of those British cabinet ministers who took Great Britain into war twice in a quarter-century. By the turn of the 20th century the British, like most of the peoples of Western Europe, were nominally Christian, at best. Neville Chamberlain, Churchill's predecessor, who first "appeased" Hitler in Munich and later issued the fatal war guarantee to Poland, throughout his life had no interest in religion, organized or otherwise. (His father had been Unitarian but made no attempt to press even that thin, denatured gruel upon his family.) Churchill's contemporaries suspected him of having no principles, and Churchill himself admitted, at the age of 24, that "I do not care so much for the principles I advocate as for the impression which my words produce and the reputation they give me." But, again, how greatly did the great man differ in this respect from his colleagues, the successors of the British Victorian moralist politicians of the previous era?

It is always a dangerous thing to hang an historical argument on the person of a single actor, particularly when he is really one of a crowd of more-or-less like-minded associates, and other players. And added to this are the dangers of counterfactual history. If we agree to imagine Winston Churchill not having been a parliamentary presence for 64 years, may we also suppose that another man would not have supplied an equivalent voice in British politics? All the same, Churchill was, as Buchanan calls him, "*an* indispensable man" (emphasis mine) in his time, as well as an inimitable one.

Issues of emphasis aside, Pat Buchanan's revisionist depiction of the *Weekly Standard*'s Man of the Century is an arresting one, not least because Buchanan displays a startling ability to pull down, in seemingly effortless fashion, the precisely apt Churchill quotes and incidents he needs to score his points effectively.

Buchanan's Winston Churchill (the hero of Ladysmith) is very much the English Theodore Roosevelt ("that damned cowboy in the White House"): a brilliant, gifted, and preternaturally dynamic man and a first-rate personality whose statesmanship was nevertheless deeply flawed and misguided, owing to profound errors of vision. Both men were aristocrats, romantics, and adventurers. Both were warriors who delighted in war, and in the prospect of war. Both were accomplished literary artists, as well as eminently successful politicians. Both were religious skeptics, unchurched agnostics who believed that death meant personal extinction. In this last respect, Churchill and Roosevelt were very much men of their own time, of their class, and of their Anglo-Saxon civilization. Both were high-spirited and impulsive, subject to fits of enthusiastic irresponsibility. And both were flamboyant egoists and consummate actors, whom life fascinated and who were capable (as Mencken wrote of Roosevelt) of "making [their] doings fascinating to others."

Buchanan's account of the first lord of the admiralty's warmongering in the British Cabinet discussions during the days before the government declared war on Germany (August 4, 1914) is typical of his treatment of Churchill throughout this book. "The Cabinet was absolutely against war and would never have agreed to being committed to war," Churchill himself wrote. Only Sir Edward Grey, the foreign secretary, and the first lord favored taking Britain into armed conflict, should war on the Continent come. "But only the First Lord relished the prospect," Buchanan writes. Churchill reacted to Grey's suggestion of a conference of ambassadors to forestall hostilities by complaining that it seemed the country was faced, after all, by "bloody peace." "[E]verything," he wrote to Clementine three days later, "tends toward catastrophe and collapse. I am interested, geared up and happy. Is it not horrible to be built like that?"

At the Cabinet meeting on the morning of August 2, he demanded instant mobilization. That afternoon, Lloyd George, then serving as chancellor of the exchequer, refused to lead those ministers who wanted peace out of the Cabinet, which might have caused Asquith's government to fall—in which case, says Buchanan, "history would have taken another course." "The key figure," he adds, "was Lloyd George, and Churchill played a major role in winning his support for a declaration of war." Violet Asquith, observing the Cabinet during the luncheon interval, recorded that "all those I saw looked racked with anxiety and some stricken with grief. Winston alone was buoyant." Churchill was as avid for his bully war as TR was for his own war with Spain.

World War I was not the kaiser's war. And World War II, Buchanan argues, was not Hitler's war: "It was Chamberlain's war and Churchill's war." Churchill, Buchanan claims, was responsible for "egging on" Chamberlain to issue (on March 31, 1939) the fatal war guarantee to Poland—the first given by a British prime minister to an Eastern European nation—only to lay responsibility for the deed on his dead rival ten years later. Buchanan does quote Basil Liddell Hart's history of World War II, where he says of Chamberlain,

> It is only too evident that in 1939 he, like most of Britain's leaders, acted on a hot-headed impulse, instead of with the cool-headed judgment that was once characteristic of British statesmanship.

Impulsiveness, according to Liddell Hart, was not a quality of heart and mind restricted in the crisis to Winston Churchill. Liddell Hart and Buchanan suggest that Chamberlain issued his guarantee—despite his lifelong belief that Britain had no vital interest in Eastern Europe—from the shame and humiliation of Munich, from fear of the Tory back-benchers, and from a panicked conviction that Hitler was out to dominate the world. Buchanan attributes Churchill's belligerency to his aristocratic detestation of Adolf Hitler and his regime,

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couched in idealistic terms as when he told Parliament, "The preservation and integrity of Poland must be regarded as a cause commanding the regard of all the world." He added the observation that the prime minister and his critics were now agreed that "we can no longer be pushed from pillar to post." Churchill was supported by his followers in Parliament, and by Labour MPs determined on a program of war.

Mr. Buchanan does not dispute Churchill's greatness as a war leader. But he is enormously critical of his foresight and acumen as a statesman. Buchanan insists that Great Britain had no cause whatsoever to go to war against Hitler—and every reason not to do so. World War II came "at the wrong time, in the wrong place, for the wrong reason," and the decision to go to war was "the greatest blunder in British history." Great Britain had, indeed, no vital interest in Eastern Europe. A German march eastward might endanger the Soviet Union, certainly not the island kingdom. As Chamberlain and Churchill had known all along, Britain had no means to honor the guarantee they had made to Poland. Indeed, she was wholly unprepared militarily to do battle with the Reich. Hitler despised neither Great Britain, nor the British people (who were not targets of the Nazi racial ideology), nor the British Empire. In fact he admired them, had no intention of turning Britons into "slaves," and far preferred to become their ally rather than their enemy. Had Britain stayed out of the German-Polish imbroglio, Hitler would indeed have pushed eastward, run up against Stalin, and most likely destroyed the Soviet state. Instead, Great Britain went to war unnecessarily on behalf of Poland, for which she paid the price in 400,000 dead, the ruination of her economy and national bankruptcy, and the loss of her empire. Once Britain was in, the Eastern European war became the continental European war, which mushroomed—inevitably!—into World War II. Thus Pat Buchanan has modified John Lukacs's concept of the Last European War, which the United States expanded to the proportions of another world war by her entry into the conflict two years later. According to Buchanan's formulation, it was the British intrusion upon an Eastern European war that guaranteed the later global conflict, not the American engagement with the wider European war, that produced World War II. Hence the paradox perceived by Buchanan. Churchill became the savior of Britain, having nearly destroyed her. Or, in Buchanan's words, "He had been a great man—at the cost of his country's greatness."

Pat Buchanan faults Churchill for his obsession with Hitler and national socialism, an obsession that was in part responsible for his gullibility in respect of Stalin ("I like that man," he said after Potsdam) and his acquiescence in the creation of Soviet hegemony in Eastern Europe postwar. Likewise, John Lukacs, in the wake of his review of Buchanan's book in the *American Conservative*, has been sharply criticized for emphasizing, throughout his career, the threat of national socialism—a poisonous combination, as Lukacs sees it, of the two great political heresies of modern times, and a greater, more prevalent, and longer-lasting danger than communism to the West.

I shall not take sides here except to point out that the America that Pat Buchanan, in his final exhortative chapter, argues is presently seeking to inherit the British Empire, while she hardly resembles the Germany of Adolf Hitler, indeed combines socialist institutions by another name with a degree of aggressive ideological nationalism that is as dangerous to herself as it is to other countries and regions of the world where she has chosen to assert herself, her interests, and her official values with an arrogance that is matched only by her stupidity and ignorance of history. The modern-day United States even has a racial ideology: People of color are morally and culturally superior to white people. As for Mr. Buchanan's comparison of the Hegemonic Nation with the Empire of Disraeli and Winston Churchill, I can only point out that the times and the circumstances are hardly comparable. More importantly, the government and people of Great Britain in her imperial era were wholly unlike the governments and people of the United States since her founding. Empire is consistent with monarchical government and a clearly delineated social hierarchy fixed on aristocratic principles, not with a democratic republic—or the mass-democratic bureaucracy that our own republic has become. Americans and their governments, lacking the sense of assurance and command—combined with a spirit of self-sacrifice—that came naturally to their British cousins, have never been able, as we say, to "do" empire, whereas the British did it supremely well, and for centuries. Even today, at what is surely past the height of American power and prestige from which everything to come will be (probably precipitously) downhill, the United States cannot be said to enjoy or to profit from her so-called empire. Whitehall, like Washington today, had redeemable commitments all over the world. But the British knew how to make those commitments work for them, and so they got something—in fact, they got a very great deal, by way of a counterbalance—in return. Their commitments were, in the main, assets. Our own are simply liabilities.

The 20th century is surely material for a prophet of biblical stature. Indeed, it is material for a million prophets, a million of whom in fact probably arose and had their unrecorded or unnoted say over the course of the past hundred years. From the sinking of *Titanic* two years before Sarajevo to the collapse of the Soviet Union and the slow, progressive suicide of the United States and of the American people, the century's history has been one vast epic saga, the poetry of which is written in the Divinity's own fierce metric. How many of that saga's episodes, how many of its heroes and villains, how many of its decisions taken (or avoided) have been unnecessary or inevitable to the grand design, I, for one, cannot say. ◁▷

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The Perfect Republic

by George W. Carey

Organizing the Revolution: Selections From Augustin Cochin
translated by Nancy Derr Polin
Rockford, IL: Chronicles Press; 233 pp., $19.95

Augustin Cochin (1876-1916), a French historian little known today, sought to provide a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of the French Revolution with an eye to discovering the reasons for the terror and butchery that arose in its course. The nature and depth of his motivations and concerns can be gleaned from his judgment that the "last three months of Terror" were not only the "most odious" in the history of the French nation but perhaps the "most interesting" in the annals of recorded history. At this time, he observes, "a moral, political, and social experiment was attempted unique in the course of centuries," and, what is more, "the mysterious depths of the human soul, under the action of causes still little known, gave birth to unprecedented acts, sentiments, and types [of men]." Unfortunately, Cochin fell victim to World War I and never completed his task.

This volume, with a fine Preface by Claude Polin, consists of generous translated portions of Cochin's unfinished manuscripts that deal with various aspects of the Revolution and its ideological underpinnings. While some of his observations and conclusions are not fully developed, the broad outlines of his approach and thesis are clear enough. Cochin held that the roots of the French Revolution are to be found in the highly influential and interconnected Philosophical Societies that sprouted up over the course of three decades preceding the Revolution. These Societies, as Cochin takes great pains to point out, were by their very nature a world apart from the larger society; their "single goal" was "bringing 'enlightened thinkers' together, thinking in common for thinking's sake, without any practical goal, seeking speculative truth together for its own sake." This detachment, in turn, had serious consequences: "Whereas in the real world the judge of any notion is its testing, and its goal is what it actually achieves," in the world of the Philosophical Societies, "the judge was other people's opinions, and the goal was their consent." Their purely philosophical world, to put this somewhat otherwise, was conducive to building "cities in the clouds."

With the Revolution, these Societies eventually formed the nucleus of the "Jacobin machine" and the indispensable constituents of "pure" or "direct democracy," the foundational principle of the "Revolutionary government." "Direct sovereignty of the people, pure democracy," Cochin points out, "implies a network of standing Societies." "One does not see how," he continues,

> not [only] the reign, but the very existence of the sovereign would be possible without such Societies, how the sovereign could become aware of itself. There is no sovereign people, strictly speaking, except there [in Societies].

Thus, according to Cochin, did Societies come to exercise complete control over elected, judicial, and administrative officers. "From the moment of their creation," he notes,

> the popular Societies watched the established authorities and the government itself. And it was this surveillance that constituted freedom: for the people, unable to be always gathered in primary assemblies, spread out into smaller societies in order to keep an eye on the holders of power.

In addition, the inherent character of these "popular Societies" provided an environment highly receptive to Rousseau's teachings, which had an enormous influence on the substance and scope of their control. Indeed, the impact of Rousseau's thought on the course of events in this era would be hard to overstate because, as Cochin points out, from the time of its publication in 1762, his *Social Contract* also served as a "catechism" for the Philosophical Societies.

A goodly portion of Cochin's analysis is devoted to the organization and operation of the Societies and their impact on the psychology and thinking of their members that produced conformity, inertia, subservience, and the like within their ranks. Certainly one of his more significant findings is that the Societies (the "small" societies) did not reflect the will of the larger society. On the contrary, as he stresses at various points, the Societies actually reflected the opinions of a relatively few members, an inner circle of "wire pullers." Citing the observations of Bryce and Ostrogorski regarding "wire pullers" and American political machines, he concludes that there is a "law of automatic selection" which inevitably operates in egalitarian organizations to place power in the hands of a few. Moreover, he points out, this concentration of power also occurred among the Societies, leading eventually to the emergence of a "Society of Societies" that operated to support, direct, and unify "the action of the inner circles in the entire Society." With the establishment of the Revolutionary government, these developments produced a widening "gap between the sovereign people" (those in the Societies) "and the [real] people" (those of the larger society). These findings led Cochin to one of the major conclusions of his research, a conclusion that contradicts standard explanations for the Reign of Terror, which place the blame on "conspirators and tyrants" ("the great hue and cry of Thermidor") or on the corruption of French society as a whole. Such explanations, he insists, miss the mark. Rather, as he would have it, the terror that gripped the nation was "not the intentional work of a plot or a man, but [rather] the natural and unconscious Work of the Jacobin machine, *i.e.*, of a regime and a frame of mind."

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Cochin's account, taken as a whole, reveals how a number of factors conjoined to produce the severity of the tyranny and terror that overtook the Revolution. To begin with, the inner circles of the Societies were made up of Jacobin ideologues under the spell of Rousseau's doctrines and theory, oblivious to the realities of the wider society and, thus, unaware of the enormous social costs involved in their impossible quest for the perfect republic. The direct democracy, in turn, operated in the absence of the rule of law and without any acknowledgment of a distinction between state and society. Under its terms all powers were concentrated in the same hands with an "unlimited right over lives and property." Thus, the full totalitarian potentialities of Rousseau's General Will—*i.e.*, "that each person's life and possessions are . . . at the disposal of the sovereign people"—became a reality, increasingly so as a "humanitarian patriotism" consumed the Jacobins. This patriotism not only eclipsed lesser patriotisms in the cause of national unity but served to justify atrocities as promoting the republic's survival and well-being. "No political faith," Cochin asserts, "had ever had such disregard for human lives." At the same time—thanks in part to the influence of the Encyclopedists—restraints on individual or collective action such as "experience, tradition, and faith"—that which might impose limitations on "free thought"—had been severely weakened.

Cochin's work details the intricate interrelationship between ideology, organization, and action that those familiar with Eric Voegelin's writings would call a gnostic movement. As such, there are abundant parallels between the picture Cochin draws and the gnostic movements of the 20th century in both Germany and Russia. Yet, as this work reveals, understanding the underpinning of the French Revolution is probably more valuable for those concerned about the future of Western democracies. And this, quite aside from the insights it provides into the French Revolution, is one of its chief virtues. Certainly this is the case with regard to the United States, where Rousseauian notions of democracy have made such headway over the course of the last century that fundamental principles underlying the Philadelphia Constitution have been discarded. Cochin's analysis, for example, clearly suggests that the centralization of political power at the national level coupled with the growth of executive powers must be viewed with trepidation. This development, as the American invasion of Iraq demonstrates, renders the system vulnerable to control by well-financed and well-organized ideological cliques with characteristics—in particular, an incapacity to grasp existential reality—similar to those of the Jacobin Societies. Or, to take another example, his analysis lends considerable weight to the warnings of those cultural conservatives sensitive to Tocqueville's teachings—namely, that the weakening of associations, institutions, and affiliations that stand between the individual and the centralized government produces deracinated and isolated individuals incapable of offering effective resistance to oppressive policies. In view of this, the decline of intermediate institutions, particularly the traditional family, the state's encroachment into the social sphere, and the continuing "reform" efforts to realize "direct" or plebiscitary democracy must all be viewed with great concern. Still another example of the relevance of Cochin's analysis involves the recognition that, as distinctions between society and government fade, restraints in the form of tradition, constitutionalism, or belief in a transcendent order are indispensable for limiting the powers of government. Just an awareness of this fact, for instance, should make one wary of embracing the progressive judicial doctrine of a "living Constitution."

In sum, there is no question that Cochin provides useful insights into the character and dynamics of the French Revolution. Many will find his work worthwhile for this reason alone. But it will also be of great interest to an even wider audience largely because most of his observations and conclusions are so highly relevant in identifying and assessing the dangers that can befall modern democracies.

George W. Carey is a professor of political theory at Georgetown University.

Kennedy Catholicism

by W. James Antle III

The Faithful Departed: The Collapse of Boston's Catholic Culture
by Philip F. Lawler
New York: Encounter Books; 280 pp., $25.95

The indifference of Catholic elected officials to Church teachings is so common that it rarely attracts attention, but there are occasional exceptions. When at least five fervently pro-abortion politicians took Communion at papal Masses this April, from the hands of the Pope's representative to the United States, even the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* had to take notice.

During Pope Benedict XVI's visit to the United States, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senators Ted Kennedy, John Kerry, and Christopher Dodd received Communion at Nationals Park in Washington, D.C., while former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani did so at St. Patrick's Cathedral. In Giuliani's case, this was especially troublesome, since the unabashed defender of abortion rights only sporadically attends Mass and is married to a third wife even though his second marriage was not annulled by the Church. Edward Cardinal Egan issued a statement saying, "I deeply regret that Mr. Giuliani received the Eucharist during the papal visit here in New York," and indicated that he had admonished Giuliani to stay away from the Communion rail when he became archbishop in 2000.

Yet pro-abortion Catholics are un-

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afraid to receive Communion even in the presence of the Pope, who said last year that "The killing of an innocent human child is incompatible with going into Communion in the body of Christ." Worse, Church leaders are unwilling to stop their most famous and powerful parishioners from so publicly flouting Church teachings. Nowhere is this more common than in Massachusetts, the home of Kennedy and Kerry, which is the second most Catholic state percentage-wise and arguably the most liberal in matters pertaining to the sexual revolution.

It wasn't always this way. Veteran Catholic journalist Philip F. Lawler opens *The Faithful Departed: The Collapse of Boston's Catholic Culture* by recalling that Massachusetts politicians once strove to be obedient to the Church. In 1935, Gov. James Michael Curley proposed a state lottery as a way of resolving a budget shortfall. Support for the idea was strong in both houses of the legislature, where it appeared likely to pass overwhelmingly with little debate. William Cardinal O'Connell had other ideas. "I am opposed to a state lottery," the head of the Boston archdiocese announced. Cardinal O'Connell feared it would result in "out-and-out gambling" as well as "corruption and demoralization." "Within the twenty-four hours," Lawler writes, "the lottery was dead." The next day, the Massachusetts House of Representatives voted 187 to 40 against it. Governor Curley was forced to withdraw his support for the plan. And the commonwealth was without a lottery for the next 35 years.

At the peak of Catholic influence in Massachusetts, this was nothing unusual. The cardinal "single-handedly" defeated child-labor restrictions he thought were too close to "Bolshevism." Cardinal O'Connell similarly stamped down a proposal to legalize the distribution of information about birth control. When the cardinal was perceived as having endorsed Curley's opponent in Boston's 1937 mayoral election, Curley lost in a landslide. Today, the commonwealth's Catholic elected officials routinely promote legal abortion, taxpayer-funded research that involves the destruction of embryos, government recognition of homosexual partnerships, and antidiscrimination laws that in effect discriminate against faithful Catholics—all without fear of censure.

While *The Faithful Departed* discusses in great detail the Boston archdiocese's priestly sex-abuse scandal, the book is mostly a story of this transformation: How Catholic leaders, seeking to comfort the powerful and conform to the culture, ended up ceding all influence and losing the culture wars. Until at least the middle of the 20th century, the biggest political division in Massachusetts often was not between Democrats and Republicans or between the left and the right; it was between Yankee Protestants and ethnic Catholics. The Catholics prevailed demographically—Lawler discusses Massachusetts' immigration-fueled conversion from majority Protestant to majority Catholic—but the moral values that today govern Massachusetts could have emanated from the musty Unitarian or Congregationalist churches now crumbling away in obscurity. Lawler makes the case that the Boston archdiocese is a microcosm of the American Church as a whole.

By the time of Cardinal O'Connell's tenure, Catholics had become a majority of Massachusetts voters and by far the leading social influence in Boston. Lawler reports that 80 percent of area Catholics attended Mass every week, and many attended parochial schools. In 1948, Catholics for the first time captured a majority in the lower house of the state legislature. They took the state senate in 1958. When Cardinal O'Connell died in 1944, he left behind 323 parishes—98 more than he had found nearly 40 years before his elevation.

In 2006, Catholics dipped below 50 percent of Massachusetts' population for the first time since World War I. Just five priests were ordained in the state that year. There were 25 fewer parishes than when Richard Cardinal Cushing took over as archbishop from O'Connell. More than 60 have been closed since 2002. Only about 35 percent of area Catholics attend Mass in any given week; even fewer do so every Sunday.

Politically, the Church's clout is at its nadir, even though professing Catholics still dominate every elected branch of the government of Massachusetts. A majority of state legislators still identify themselves as Catholic, but, as Lawler notes, "in recent months the legislature has repeatedly passed bills that the Catholic bishops opposed—in more than one case, *without a single dissenting vote*" (emphasis his).

The only statewide elected official who opposes abortion is the auditor of the commonwealth, whose portfolio does not include social issues. Only one member of Massachusetts' congressional delegation, a Catholic Democrat from South Boston, consistently opposes abortion—and he voted to authorize an unjust war in Iraq.

What went wrong? In Lawler's telling, the Kennedys emerge as early villains. He describes patriarch Joseph Kennedy as "a ruthless businessman and noted philanderer" who was proud of his Irish Catholic heritage even as he was indifferent to the moral teachings of his Faith. Kennedy, "like many successful Catholics of his generation, saw the Catholic Church as a public institution and as the object of his personal loyalty," but not necessarily "the repository of truth about the human condition and the ultimate arbiter of moral law."

The Kennedys' ability to compartmentalize their faith did not prevent

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them from being very close to Archbishop Cushing. They were generous donors to the Boston archdiocese and were celebrated as the city's leading Catholic family. Thus, Cushing "formed an important and highly visible public alliance with a layman who was conspicuously Catholic but not at all religious." This advanced the aspirations of individual Catholics at the expense of the Church's witness.

Never was this clearer than with John F. Kennedy's famous speech to the Greater Houston Ministerial Association during the 1960 presidential campaign. Kennedy promised his Protestant audience that his Catholic faith would not affect any of his public-policy positions. They had good reason to believe him. Kennedy already supported publicly funded birth-control programs, opposed diplomatic relations with the Holy See, and considered taxpayer aid to parochial schools unconstitutional—all positions that put him at odds with American Church leaders. Kennedy's speech was a political success, helping him narrowly to defeat Richard Nixon without alienating the Catholics who would give him more than 80 percent of their votes in November.

That success came at a price, Lawler contends:

> Campaign tacticians admired the Houston speech because it proved politically expedient. Protestant fundamentalists liked it because it conceded the force of their argument against Catholic Church influence. Secularists liked it because it removed religious principles from public debates.

It also helped begin a process whereby Catholic politicians divorced their supposed religious beliefs from their conduct in office, while Church leaders were increasingly reluctant to criticize them or to endanger their flock's political ambitions.

Lawler is as critical of Cushing as he is of the Kennedys. He traces the logic of Mario Cuomo's 1984 "personally opposed" speech at Notre Dame—in which Cuomo argued that he could, as a matter of personal religious principle, disapprove of killing unborn children while legalizing and subsidizing the practice—to a statement the cardinal made almost 20 years earlier while the Massachusetts legislature was considering legalizing the sale of contraceptives statewide. Though he reaffirmed Church teaching on contraception, Cushing said, "I am also convinced that I should not impose my position—moral beliefs or religious beliefs—on those of other faiths." He offered this advice to Catholics in the legislature: "If your constituents want this legislation, vote for it."

The compartmentalization reached new levels after Fr. Robert Drinan was elected to the U.S. Congress in 1970. Wearing his priestly collar, he defended legal abortion and *Roe* v. *Wade*. After his retirement from the House in 1980—forced upon him by Pope John Paul II's directive that priests must not hold elected office—Drinan even supported partial-birth abortion, until his Jesuit superiors demanded a retraction. During the 1970's, Massachusetts Catholic leaders were more effective in advocating the demolition of South Boston's neighborhood schools through forced busing than in repudiating Drinan's pro-abortion congressional voting record.

Some high-profile Catholics dissented. Longtime State Senate President William Bulger, Boston Mayor Raymond Flynn, and one-term Gov. Edward King spoke out against abortion, homosexuality, and condom distribution in the public schools (though King was frequently criticized by the archdiocese because of his unstinting support for capital punishment). Neglected by Lawler is former House Speaker Thomas Finneran, the most recent—and perhaps the last—Democratic leader in the state legislature to oppose abortion and homosexual "marriage." Fewer courageous voices could be found in the Boston media. Lawler writes,

> There were two tradition-minded Jewish columnists (Don Feder and Jeff Jacoby), and a conservative Baptist (Joe Fitzgerald), but not a single prominent newspaper columnist or talk-show host who could plausibly be described as a Catholic conservative.

Similarly, non-Catholic voices were the strongest in decrying homosexual "marriage": the campaign against the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court's *Goodridge* decision was led by out-of-state evangelicals, including the Georgia Baptist preacher who ran the Massachusetts Family Institute. The politician who most strongly defended traditional marriage, however ineffectually and opportunistically, was the Mormon governor Mitt Romney. By then, Catholics had been effectively sidelined by the clerical sex-abuse scandals, making the recognition of the heterosexual nature of marriage by the Commonwealth a casualty of the toleration of homosexuals in the priesthood.

Lawler's book makes a compelling case that the sex-abuse scandals were a symptom rather than a cause of the Church's eroded moral authority. He is equally sound on the scandal itself, explaining that it involved not only the abuse of children but the complicity of bishops and an acquiescence to a homosexual subculture. Lawler, a former editor of the Boston archdiocese's newspaper, the *Pilot*, is generally unflinching in his criticism of area Catholic leaders such as Bernard Cardinal Law.

Unfortunately, Lawler focuses only on left-liberal cafeteria Catholics in his scathing but judicious indictment, while ignoring neoconservative ones. And he never asks whether the lost Boston he mourns might not itself have been guilty of a degree of cultural accommodation, which set the stage for eventual crowd-pleasing positions by the bishops. But he has done valuable work nevertheless in showing that the compromises of Kennedy Catholicism cannot hold.

W. James Antle III is associate editor of the American Spectator.

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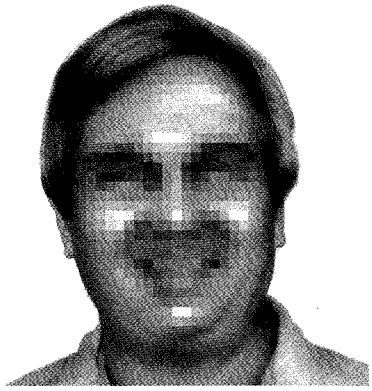
by Joe Ecclesia

Yang and Soap Suds



Your Excellency:

Right now the weather here is hotter than those vestments Pope Benedict refused to wear for World Youth Day. By noon the sidewalks wiggle with waves of heat, and the very air leaks terrestrial perspiration. The afternoons are too sultry to work in the garden of She-Who-Commands-My-Heart-and-My-Spade, and my preparations for teaching my fall classes are nearly complete. With time on my hands, I surfed the net this morning, where my wandering fingers carried me to our diocesan website.

This website testifies to the gifts conferred by your teaching and leadership. While caring for the poor and educating the young, including the worshipers of iPod and YouTube, you have also done much to strengthen the hearts of the faithful. This past spring, for example, you asked your priests to become "slaves for the Lord," old language which doubtless rang like music in the ears of your tougher padres. The site also reported that 14 diocesan priests were recently trained to offer the old Latin Mass and can now celebrate "the Mass in the extraordinary form," as it's called. A *Catholic News and Herald* article describes how Dr. William Thierfelder, president of Belmont Abby College, ordered the clauses permitting abortion, contraception, and voluntary sterilization stricken from the college's employee health policy. Despite protests and the threat of a lawsuit, Dr. Thierfelder stood his ground, saying that, "As a Catholic College sponsored by the monks of Belmont Abbey, Belmont Abbey College will not offer nor subsidize these coverages," for, "[t]o do so would be to act contrary to the college's stated mission and identity."

To ask priests to work as Christ's "slaves" is manly. To make available the Latin Mass, masculine in its stillness and its austere rubrics, is manly. To take a stand like Dr. Thierfelder is manly.

Manliness sounds threatening—even provocative—in today's culture. By its absence from daily conversation we know the depth of the word's offense. How often do we hear manliness praised today in the Catholic Church? How often do priests offer homilies touting such masculine ideals as restraint, courage, duty, and honor? What place is made for men in Mass when the musical repertoire consists of "Be Not Afraid," "Eagle's Wings," and "They'll Know We Are Christians by Our Love"?

The Church has spent 50 years moving, as the Chinese might say, from yang to yin. In many parishes the fear of offending ordinary sinners from the pulpit, the cloying hymns, and the squishy prayers have elevated feminine values while ignoring or even disparaging masculine ones. Many musicians, priests, and lay ministers have reduced Christ to a namby-pamby advocate of peace and love who came not with a sword, but with a bottle of soap bubbles and a magic wand.

In June, I visited my father in Florida, where I attended the Saturday evening vigil Mass. Down the aisle came a single altar boy, followed by a train of ten women—lectors and Eucharistic ministers—and a lone priest. Their assemblage brought to mind a Tupperware party.

Our own diocesan web page provides my second example. Of the employees listed there, at least 80 percent are female. If these figures were reversed, wouldn't there be hell to pay? Why this discrepancy in hiring? Does it occur because the diocese also "employs" priests? Is the pay too low for men? Do women oversee the hiring?

In the meantime, deemphasized masculinity and the general failure of fatherhood have ravaged American families. Every year tens of thousands of boys come of age without fathers. No one teaches them what it means to be a man. No one shows them how a man stands up for his family, how a real man goes out every day and takes the punches that life throws at him.

Occasionally, the Church does respond to such needs. At the Catholic University of America, for example, the Rev. Robert Schlageter, O.F.M., has organized Esto Vir ("Be a Man"—from the writings of Fr. Jose Maria Escriva). With Father Schlageter's encouragement, students designed Esto Vir to appeal to the chivalric side of young men, particularly those more at ease on a sports field than in a prayer group. Members of Esto Vir practice prayer, brotherhood, chastity, self-sacrifice, and fortitude. Realizing that frat parties and skirt chasing breed not men but boys, they perceive life as a battle and wish to become fit soldiers. They understand that men need to hear from the Church more about the Christ who drove the moneychangers from the temple, who fought off the temptations of Satan, who told the Pharisees to put a sock in it, who took a beating, a trial, and a crucifixion without once wallowing in self-pity.

There's a scene in *The Godfather*, Your Excellency, where a tearful movie star, Johnny Fontane, asks Vito for help with his failed career. "O Godfather," he snivels. "I don't know what to do! I don't know what to do!" The Godfather doesn't hand him a tissue or hold his hand. He shakes Fontane, slaps his face, and says, "You can act like a man!"

We need the Church these days to teach young males (and quite a few old ones) how to act like men—or better yet, how to be men.

Joe Ecclesia ⟨C⟩

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by Scott P. Richert

Summertime Blues

Driving from Rockford to St. Paul, Minnesota, is a bit like going back in time. St. Paul (like La Crosse, Wisconsin, where we crossed over the Mississippi River just hours before it began to burst its banks) is relatively well preserved, unlike its clearly fraternal twin.

Much of the city is stunningly beautiful—from the immaculately maintained Summit Avenue, the height of Upper Midwestern bourgeois civilization, over to the century-old St. Paul Cathedral, down the hill to the capitol with its golden dome, and into the downtown, where Mickey's Diner has remained open 24 hours per day, 7 days per week, for over 65 years. St. Paul Cathedral was the brainchild of Archbishop John Ireland, whose Americanism not only helped make the Catholic Church in America what it is (not) today but also made him the father of the Orthodox Church in America, when he overstepped his authority and refused to allow Fr. Alexis Toth to minister to Ruthenian Catholics who resided in the archdiocese of St. Paul. Father Alexis, like many of his fellow Ruthenian Rite priests, was married (although he had been a widower for almost a decade by the time he came to these shores), and Archbishop Ireland (and many, many other Irish-American priests) could not tolerate the diversity of rites and practices within the Catholic Church. Father Alexis took his congregation into the Russian Orthodox Church and, over the next 15 years, brought 20,000 Eastern Rite Catholics along with him. (Most Orthodox churches in the United States that were founded before 1910 were originally Catholic.)

Yet this history is not what I meant by going back in time. The experience is something much more banal: a sense of returning to the open road, to the "car culture" of the 1950's and the decades that followed.

As gas prices have roared past four dollars per gallon across most of the United States (they are hovering just under in Minnesota and Wisconsin at the moment), local traffic has hardly been reduced at all. That is not a surprise: Our jobs are farther away than ever from our homes, and few neighborhoods have their own Wal-Mart.

The interstates, however, seem to be a different matter. Once we leave the vicinity of any city of any size (Rockford, La Crosse, St. Paul, Eau Claire, Madison), the traffic on this mid-June weekend drops to a minimum. From 20 miles outside of La Crosse to 20 miles outside of St. Paul, we may have seen three-dozen cars in total.

Yet the absence of cars does not mean the absence of car culture. Wisconsin and Minnesota highways may be no Route 66, but the cheese huts and regional gas-station chains with attached restaurants offering all-you-can-eat pancakes for $4.99 are relics of a more carefree time, when fathers could take a week or two or four off work during the summer and families would pile into faux-wood-paneled station wagons with no air conditioning and no seat belts, young arms and feet hanging out every window, tossing steel pop cans and sandwich wrappers and occasionally even expensive orthopedic shoes alongside the road, to the teary-eyed dismay of the noble Indian whose tribe had once cared for the pristine wilderness now being despoiled (as everything always is) by the white man.

The drive-in theaters of the postwar era are almost all gone, but a number of the drive-in burger joints and custard stands and ticky-tacky souvenir shops remain, as does that garish monument to American excess, the Wisconsin Dells. Yes, McDonald's is everywhere, yet on the highways it hardly feels out of place, being itself a relic of that car culture, the mobile equivalent of the TV dinners that the travelers happily consumed at home.

Having both enjoyed and suffered through such road trips myself in the latter half of the 70's and early 80's, I cannot help but feel a bit nostalgic for the days when a family could afford to "see the sights" and mark off each state, headed toward that glorious moment when they could stand at Four Corners and announce that they had now set foot in all 48 of the contiguous United States.

The lonely roads this weekend suggest that those days are coming to an end, and much of the postwar American lifestyle with them. The General Motors plant in Janesville, Wisconsin, which makes trucks and Suburbans and is the largest employer in the county, will close forever in 2010. A senior executive at Ford has suggested that high gas prices may force the company to curtail its light-truck business, at least in the United States. Here in the Midwest, many of those best able to take time off and to afford road trips were those who worked in the auto industry or for the small manufacturers who supported the Big Three. No longer.

My rented Mazda gets over 30 miles to the gallon, and it performs surprisingly well for a four-cylinder, but it is not a family car—at least, not a car for a family on vacation, even if that family, like most today, has only two children. Part of me would gladly trade it for a Chevy Impala station wagon, rusted exhaust pipe held together by two clamps and an empty can of Campbell's Bean With Bacon soup, with windows that often do not work and an AM radio with an antenna that rarely does. And the 39 or 79 or even 99 cent gas that fed it all—the car, the pollution, the kitsch, and the memories. ©

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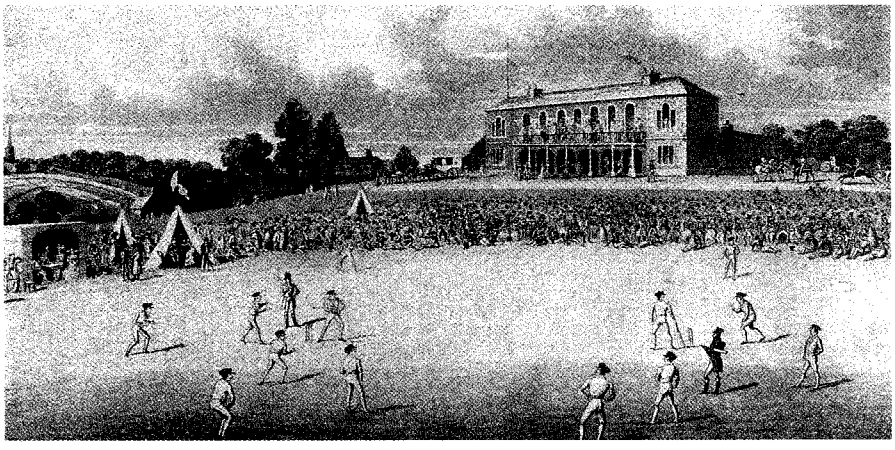
Letter From Australia

by Christopher Sandford

Don Bradman

You're facing the veteran and famously accurate San Diego Padres pitcher Greg Maddux from a distance of 22 yards, armed only with a three-foot wooden club and your own nerve. To enliven the proceedings, Maddux interacts with you not from the traditional, essentially static crouch, but after a 20- or 30-yard headlong sprint from the outfield to the pitcher's mound, at the climax of which he hurls a cherry-red leather ball in the general direction of your ankles. In most cases the ball will hit the turf, deviate sharply left or right, and rear up somewhere toward your unprotected midriff. For good measure, Maddux will periodically vary the routine by dropping the ball in shorter, with the result that it bounces off the grass and bears in on your head; at your discretion, you may have previously equipped yourself with a device much like a motorcyclist's helmet for the event. Other than avoiding serious injury, your primary job is to score runs—the currency of the game—by striking the ball to the field boundary (accruing four if it bounces before crossing the line, or six if still airborne), or far enough from the eleven fielders to allow you, the batsman, to run to the other end of the 22-yard infield before the ball can be returned. At least two bowlers must take turns, from alternating ends; also, there are always two batsmen on the field, each to take a turn as required. When the entire batting team has been dismissed, either by committing one of various technical indiscretions or by being rendered *hors de combat*, the teams' roles are reversed. After all the players required to bat on both sides have done so either once or twice, a ritual that can take from a few hours to as long as five days, the total number of runs accumulated determines the winner—unless time runs out first and the result is a draw.

There, in a nutshell, is cricket, which despite or because of its fabled idiosyncrasies remains the world's second most popular sport, after soccer. The game's exact origins are a matter of scholarly debate, but it's generally agreed that in the England of the mid-16th century the essential bat-ball combat at the heart of the proceedings had evolved far enough to be recognized as the highly structured contest enjoyed in some 80 countries, including the United States, today. The roughly 500 years of cricket's modern incarnation have seen a fair share of individual geniuses, eccentrics, and sundry other performers who have gone on to prominence in other fields. Samuel Beckett, to give just one example, graced two "first-class" (or semi-professional) matches some 40 years before he went on to win the Nobel Prize for literature. It seems somehow fitting that the author of *Waiting for Godot* should be described as an "enigmatic" player in the surviving contemporaneous account of his brief sporting career.



But for sheer technical skill, allied to almost robotic powers of concentration and resilience, no batsman has rivaled the Australian player Sir Don(ald) Bradman, who was born a century ago, on August 27, 1908, and died, aged 92, in 2001. He still bestrides the history of cricket today, 60 years after his last professional appearance. Bradman not only rewrote cricket's record books but, in the process, became a somewhat unlikely symbol of Australian republicanism in the 1930's and beyond. At the depth of the Great Depression, some 40 percent of that nation's workforce was unemployed, and GDP fell by more than a quarter. Many Australian commentators chose not to explain the crisis in terms of global market forces, but rather as an act of deliberate economic policy by the British and their "rank financ[ial] exploitation" of their "so-called colonial possessions," to quote Jack Lang, the charismatic populist premier of New South Wales, one of the hardest-hit states.

In due course, the outwardly diffident but self-aware Bradman became a nationalist icon, a role he performed with characteristic determination. As a result, international (or "Test") matches between the Australian and English cricket teams were invariably highly charged affairs, with Bradman thrust in the role of the plucky David confronting and more often than not slaying the imperial Goliath. No sportsman has come to symbolize national pride or aspiration quite like he did.

Bradman was born in the small town of Bowral, some 70 miles south of Sydney, into a middle-class, church-going Anglican family. As a boy he was keen on tennis and golf, and, even then, had a prodigiously good head for figures. It is said that he turned to

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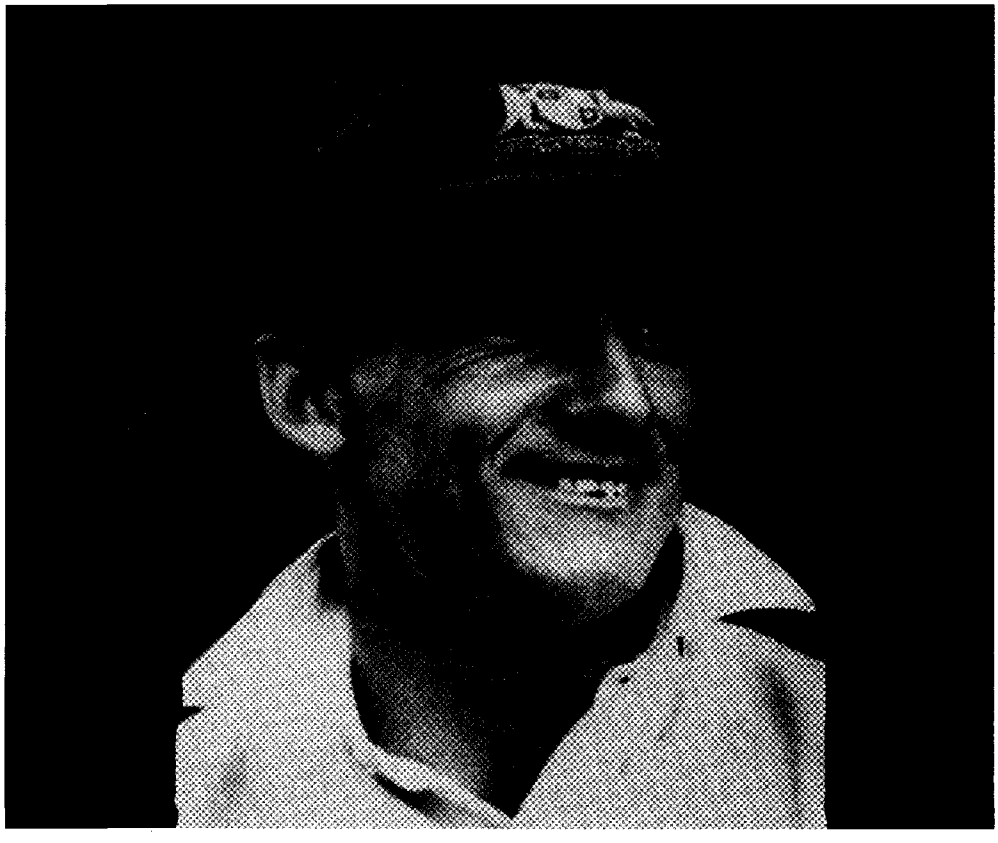
cricket chiefly because, after protracted negotiation, the local Sydney team agreed to pay him his travel expenses. The club offered a munificent 30 shillings per game at a time when the round-trip train fare from Bowral was only 9 shillings, allowing the teenager to show a handsome profit. Bradman was to apply much the same principle throughout his career, in which he was sometimes thought to have devoted himself as diligently to the material and commercial aspects of the sport as he did to his peerless batting technique.

At the start of the 1928 season, Bradman, at 20, was a regular choice for the New South Wales team. In time the Australian selectors chose him for his first Test match, against the visiting English side. (Before mentioning Bradman's international career, a word about the art of scoring runs: Compared with baseball, cricket is a swingfest in which a batsman can be in play for hours, literally, not least because he alone decides, once having hit the ball, whether or not to risk the sprint to the other end of the infield. It is perfectly possible for him to hit the ball some 30 or 40 yards yet do nothing at all about it except to wait for the next opportunity. The figures are approximate, but a below-average batsman generally hits fewer than 30 runs in a match. Good batting means a "half-century" (50) or the rare but coveted "century.") In his inaugural Test, Bradman scored 18 and 1, and was promptly dropped from the national team. Recalled later in the series, he scored 79, 112, 40, 58, and 123 in five consecutive innings. Eighteen months later, Bradman was with the Australian side on the return tour of England. Certain observers gave the opinion that he would struggle to score runs on the damper English fields, which traditionally favor the bowler over the batsman. Bradman mocked the doubters with scores of 8, 131, 254, 334, 14, and 232. In terms both of runs and of the technical efficiency with which he scored them, this was batting on a plane never before seen. Bradman's technique was a fascination not only to the general public but to fellow professionals who knew just how difficult a game cricket is. His quick-footedness in moving toward the bounce of the ball, the essential position for an attacking shot, seemed to defy the conventional laws of physics. Conversely, should the bowler bounce it shorter, Bradman would step back with a perfectly timed shuffle and imperiously dispatch the ball to the boundary with the fluency of a knife spreading butter. For such a trim, lightly built man, he played his shots with compulsive power, but with no suggestion of strain or even exertion. In that curious way it has when struck by a great cricket player, the ball seemed to find some hidden acceleration as it went, to gather pace when it was halfway to the boundary.

In the Australian cricket season of 1932-33, the visiting Englishmen under their captain Douglas Jardine tried to intimidate Bradman. The basic idea was for the English bowlers to deliver the ball short and at extreme speed so that it spat up toward the batsman's ribs, a technique that came to be known as "bodyline." The folk memory of the resulting series is of a cruel and effete British aristocrat tormenting a naive and uncomplaining Australian country boy. It's a caricature, if one that has a grain of truth. Certainly the famously unsentimental Jardine established his intent early on, when, before the first match of the series, he summoned his players to announce gravely that from then on Bradman would be known not as "Bradman" or "Don" but as "the little bastard." The bastard in question scored 0, 103 not out, 8, 66, 76, 24, 48, and 71 in eight Test innings, giving him an average of 56.57, or roughly half his previous career figure. A lesser batsman would consider even those statistics highly creditable. That such a brutal method of attack—the subject of indignant cables between the Australian and British governments—had to be used at all merely burnished the Bradman legend.

By the mid 1930's, the slight, soft-spoken Bradman enjoyed iconographic status both in Australia and throughout the rest of the cricket-playing world. When he walked out to bat at any of his home grounds in New South Wales, he was accompanied by a steady crescendo in the sort of rowdy whoops and high-pitched acclaim



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later to be associated with major rock stars. Thirty years before the Beatles, there was Bradmania. He was especially feted in Sydney, which boasted its three "ours": "our harbor, our bridge, and our Bradman." Not long after the bodyline episode, an Australian entrepreneur sent Bradman on a goodwill tour of North America, during which he was photographed with his baseball equivalent "Babe" Ruth at Yankee Stadium. The widely reported meeting between what the press called "the two titans" consisted in reality of little more than a succession of prolonged silences.

Ironically, perhaps the only people not fully devoted to the Bradman legend were to be found among his colleagues. From 1936 he was appointed both the captain and a selector of the Australian team. Bradman made few tactical errors, but he lacked the warmth to inspire. He was accused of occasionally "letting the game go on" and of watching it in detachment. He followed the conventions, making the required speeches and public appearances with unfailing dignity, but he never adopted the false heartiness of other contemporaneous sports stars. There was friction, too, between Bradman, who was a Protestant and a Freemason, and certain Catholic, Irish-Australian members of the national side. It reached the point where the Australian board of control formally censured four players for insubordination under Bradman's captaincy. A fifth player, a future journalist and cricket commentator named Jack Fingleton, wrote later that "the Don" was "a little, churlish man" who "didn't ever come clean as a personal member of the team; he was always a far-distant relative." Some critics went so far as to claim that Bradman, an astute business brain, had always been primarily motivated by short-term reward and acclaim, a charge his 21 years of playing at the highest level, for a fraction of the fees commanded by today's stars, would seem to refute.

In cricket, a career Test match batting average of over 40 is considered eminently respectable, even distinguished. Since international matches began in 1877, 32 players have recorded an average of over 50, and three men have edged past 60. Bradman's lifetime average is 99.94. He played his last ever Test innings in August 1948, on the eve of his fortieth birthday, at The Oval in London. Needing to score only four runs to retire with an average of 100, Bradman, who was loudly cheered by the English spectators and players on his walk to the infield, was out for nought. Some thought that the great man's normal hawklike concentration on the ball was for once impaired by emotion; it's said that "tears were literally rolling down his cheeks" as he faced the bowler. I once asked Godfrey Evans, one of the England players present that day, if the story were true. "You're kidding," he said. "Don Bradman never choked up in his life."

Christopher Sandford is a Seattle-based journalist and author. His biography of Roman Polanski will be published by Palgrave in September.

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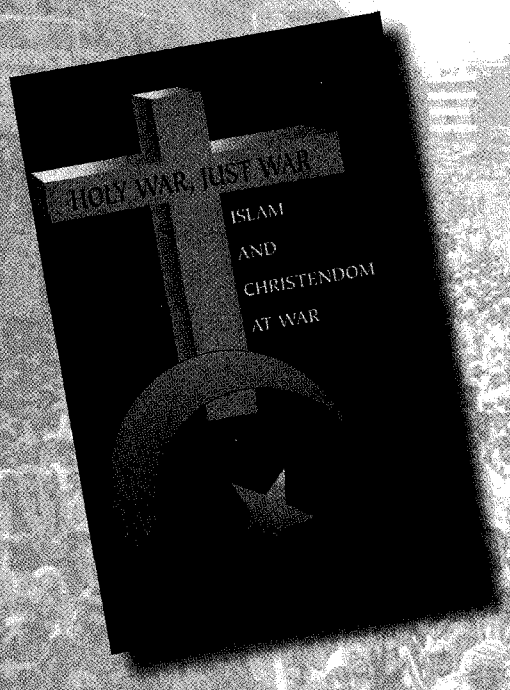

Holy War, Just War

Islam and Christendom at War

by Roberto de Mattei

"The term 'clash of civilizations' is not a palatable one in political and media circles," writes Roberto de Mattei, but it is the only proper framework for understanding how the fundamental theological differences between Christianity and Islam inform the way their adherents wage war. In this important work, he explains these differences with careful scholarship and defends with eloquence the "lawfulness of war against an enemy who is attacking the West, with the aim of establishing a moral and social order that is radically opposed to our history and tradition."

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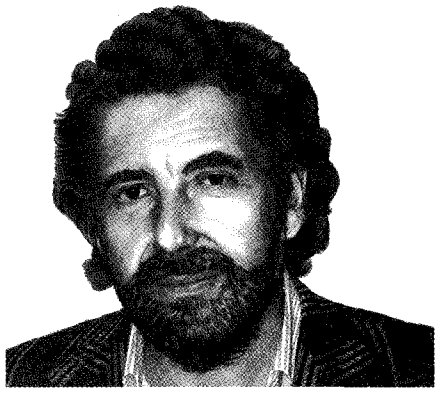
by Andrei Navrozov

Letter From a Hot Town



Cimabue the painter, passing on the road to Bologna, saw, as he walked through the village of Vespignano, a boy called Giotto drawing a sheep on a flat piece of rock. This was the moment with which, more than a century later, Lorenzo Ghiberti, the sculptor and the first art historian of the Renaissance, began his *Commentaries*. And so I, in London on a brief sojourn, with the wistfulness of an exile who longs for a glimpse of his homestead even if it should cost him his life, witnessed a scene that represents modern sensibility as the crouching form of young Giotto signaled the Renaissance.

A young woman wearing vertiginous heels, which, history records, were part of the new season's Miu Miu collection, had clambered aboard the No. 11 bound for St. Paul's and was rummaging in her handbag to find her ticket, when, by opening the doors at a bus stop, the driver caught the woman's shoe in one of them. In the space of a gasp the lacquered stiletto seemed to hold sway over the life of the bus, recalling the voluminous crinoline that dominated the life of Baudelaire in Manet's portrait of the poet's mistress. Clearly the driver, an older man, had been cognizant of the woman's charms, which culminated, as it were, in the acumination now in peril. Instinctively, he shut the doors, very nearly maiming the first in the crowd of passengers who had begun boarding. And thus, in a city of smoldering class prejudice and suppressed political resentment, obsessed with bombs and security, with never smoking and hardly ever swearing, with sexual harassment and political correctness of every conceivable kind, what I witnessed was a characteristic *instantané* from the fetish art of Eric Stanton.

One need not bone up on Vasari or peruse Ghiberti to be reminded of the monumentality of the social role reserved in Europe for the fine arts until well into the last century. "*Si monumentum requiris*," famously, runs Sir Christopher Wren's epitaph in the cathedral's crypt, "*circumspice*," and one look from the infernal Wheel will persuade the visitor that London, like all the great effigies of European civilization, is indeed part of the same aesthetic tradition that has raised Rome and Paris, one that has given Europe a habitation and a Christian name. Today, in London as elsewhere, it survives solely in the art of adorning women, in makeup, hairdressing and dressmaking, in the cosmetics industry and the incalculable myriad enterprises that, like the artists' workshops of old, strive to elevate their craft to a position of predominance.

"Singular society, where everyone earns money or is ruined!" noted the Goncourts in their *Journal*. "Never have appearances been so imperious, so dominating, so damaging and demoralizing." At the height of the epoch that supplanted the aristocracy of class with that of money, Baudelaire was among the first to argue that "*elle doit se dorer pour être adorée*," that if a woman is to be adored, she must be adorned. Beauty is not a natural gift, but the product of reason and calculation, and only in making herself appear "magical and supernatural" with cosmetics and costumes, perfumes and jewels, does a woman attain true beauty. The feminine arts, newly dominant as sartorial fashion became a social register, have since multiplied and burgeoned, acquiring the social importance of painting and architecture during the Renaissance, when these arts, likewise, relied on patronage to distinguish, exalt, and beautify the lives of the fortunate.

Baudelaire wrote of "the muslins and the gauzes, the vast iridescent clouds of stuff in which the woman envelops herself" as "the attributes and the pedestal of her divinity." By the close of the 19th century, the writer and critic Octave Uzanne urged women to direct their art to garments wherein a man "could lose himself in soft and evanescent delicacies of colour, groping for supremely sheer and subtle textures." Even in that relatively naive era, the *Magasin des Demoiselles* already described the 1867 Paris Universal Exposition, intended by its organizers as an overview of man's technological achievement since the wheel, as "consecrated" to fabrics, clothing, ornaments, and perfumes. By 2007 most women's magazines had elected to undergo reclassification by the postal service as catalogues, in order to free themselves from restrictions on the proportion of advertising they may contain. Hence a recent issue of *Vogue* is only 13-percent editorial, and the last pretense that any conventional art, such as writing or drawing, matters, has fallen away. Advertising photography, for all intents and purposes, is the modern Studio, much as the beauty salon is the Salon. A society *visagiste*'s paintings and a plastic surgeon's sculptures, not sheep in brine and other highfalutin intellectualizations, are what go on display at the Serpentine.

The world market for conventional works of art, whose vitality is measured by the performance of the international auction houses—which, last year, sold seven billion euros' worth of paintings and sculptures, most of them by other than contemporary artists—is dwarfed in comparison with the cosmetics industry alone, with a market size valued by the European Commission as nearing €100 billion. But lipsticks and creams seem

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a mere bagatelle when one considers the whole panoply of unconventional, contemporary, living arts that go into the making of the modern European woman, who has turned every provincial town center into a caricature of the Faubourg Saint-Honoré and has set for the global manufacturing industry the course of its future development. Characteristically, since 1958 the cosmetic industry grew at the average annual rate of 4 percent, as compared with 2.8 percent for all manufacturing.

"Everything that was directly lived," wrote Guy Debord in *The Society of the Spectacle*, "has receded into a representation. In societies dominated by modern conditions of production, life is presented as an immense accumulation of spectacles." Such spectacular fetishism is indeed the face of the new London, some of whose noblest façades, symbolically, are obscured by hoardings advertising various attributes of femininity.

In fashionable restaurants, the only kind of couple one sees is an old man and a young woman. Perhaps it is the only kind there is. More likely it is the kind the proprietor is keen to attract, and indeed the old-fashioned pair of cooing turtledoves—like the diner with special needs who, while obviously lowering the tone of the establishment, must be accommodated—is nowadays looked upon by restaurateurs with a certain bemused disgust. The spectacle of love is not what this city's after.

Tall as Wren's improbable steeples in their architectonic heels, their heads a palette for the innumerable shades the art of *baliage* produces, their faces made up with the care that once went into chapel frescos, their patrons short, curt, and dismissive, preternaturally shaped blondes are the spectacle that gives London its modern edge. Designed to promote consumption, and thereby production, they are automated advertisements for the way of life that elevates spectacle to the eminence of essence, a life once upon a time only a painter or a sculptor could contemplate. Mass-produced Galateas, incubated for the most part in Russia and Eastern Europe, they have filled a fresh commercial void in the half-Manhattan, half-Babylon of the happening, cool, cosmopolitan London, itself a hybrid homunculus, whose new taboo is taboos and whose fetish is fetishism.

A Neapolitan dog, digging through the rubbish bins along the Via Posillipo, finds better nourishment than most of the lunching crowd round these parts. Salads of slime in involucres of plastic, fruit at once rubbery and wooden, fish frozen in attitudes of bereavement, chickens from commercial orphanages, puddings in vivid shades of magenta and purple, coffee in Styrofoam hog troughs—none of this matters in the new society of appearances, a cultural construct, as Feuerbach noted in *The Essence of Christianity*, wherein "truth is considered profane and only illusion is sacred." Lists, tables, graphs, calories, vitamins and minerals are everywhere, as are French words and names of obscure Italian towns side by side with native lobbying terms such as "organic" and "British," but the innate reality of food is no more part of the discourse than the Shroud of Turin is for molecular biochemists.

Transport is something out of the Dark Ages, with airports as the city gates presided over by irascible or venal keepers and the Northern Line leading, as it likely did under the Stuarts, just about nowhere—yet at the same time eerily Kafkaesque, at least to the extent that many aspects of life in Soviet Russia appeared Kafkaesque when in reality they were merely medieval. Spasms of evacuation and alarm, notices about spitting and crying, hidden cameras intended to catch the malfeasant in the act of poisoning a well, sentries on the lookout for suspicious Saracens, traffic myrmidons brandishing dysfunctional radios, and the occasional emaciated cat traversing a road in the middle distance; all these are characteristic images of the polity in the making. Four parts Matrix, one part Ivan the Terrible.

The bubble that seems to shelter those who live here is the property boom, which allows a man to borrow money while he sleeps with carelessness beyond the wildest dreams of a Balzac rentier. Thus acquired, and chancy enough to be easily parted with, that money is spent on representation of various kinds, from the public-relations stratagem of a Porsche Cayenne—four were parked, I noticed, in the 60-foot-long terminus of Draycott Avenue, including one with Moscow plates and one belonging to a Mayfair hairdresser—to the acquisition, adumbrated in the manufacturers' advertising campaign, of a platinum blonde who answers, on evenings when she is free, to the name of Candy despite the epochal incongruity that, in honor of Lenin, her communist mom and dad in the Ukraine, suspecting in *perestroika* a ploy to flush out the malcontents, called her Ulyana.

To the eye that has tired of scrutinizing fictions, on a rainy day St. Paul's seems like the sort of lumbering fake one finds in Manhattan. As I reach Liverpool Street and board the train to the airport, it occurs to me that New York's bonfire of the vanities, observed by Tom Wolfe in the 1980's, is but a provincial precursor of the grand cosmopolitan spectacle that is London in the 2000's. "The spectacle cannot be understood," wrote Debord, "as a mere visual deception produced by mass media technologies. It is a worldview that has actually been materialized."

The visitor to modern London finds himself in the awkward position of an early critic of pointillism—who notes that from a certain distance the picture on the gallery wall looks all right, but when you come close it all seems to turn to colored soap—especially in view of the fact that the dot and the pixel are integral to the omnipotent technologies in question. As an historical locus, a cultural crossroads, and a national capital, London just isn't there any more. There's only a social worldview.

If this town's hot, it's because it's burning. ©

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by Srdja Trifkovic

The E.U.S.S.R. Marches On

The coalition of multicultural fanatics, postnational technocrats, neo-Marxists, and crooks who run the European Union had warned, until the very day of the Irish referendum on the Lisbon Treaty (June 13), that its rejection would sound the death knell for the "united Europe" and mark the end of the world as we know it. But as soon as the negative result became known, France's President Sarkozy, Britain's Prime Minister Brown, and others started explaining, with a matter-of-fact aloofness, that the Irish vote did not matter: The collective march toward an ever-tighter Union must go on unhindered.

One week later, the E.U. summit in Brussels decided to move on with the treaty's ratification despite the Irish rejection, hoping that the process in all other member countries—no referenda, parliamentary votes only—will be completed in time for the next European elections in June 2009.

European Parliament President Hans-Gert Pöttering welcomed this "strong signal" from the European Council. The French leader of the E.U. Parliament's center-right EPP-ED group, Joseph Daul, was happy to see the E.U. leaders "united" in their commitment to continue the ratification process. The Austrian vice chairman of the PSE group, Hannes Swoboda, said the "rescue mission" for the Lisbon Treaty was the main challenge for the incoming French presidency that started on July 1.

There is nothing surprising about the Eurocrats' refusal to accept defeat. They are truly committed to a federal superstate, no less sincerely than the comrades east of the Berlin Wall had been committed to the Peoples' Democracies between 1945 and 1989. In their world, only a European Union free of national parliaments and wily electorates can guarantee the fulfilment of their ideological vision and, more importantly, the protection of their power and privileges in perpetuity. The lack of democratic legitimacy theoretically should mark the end of the federalist project, but its proponents see "democracy" as an annoying hindrance. The treaty's own requirement to have every member-state endorse it before it becomes legal is now regarded as less than absolute.

The E.U. leaders in Brussels and their supporters in 27 national capitals have heralded on many occasions the birth of a "new" Europe. Various treaties have been defeated several times over the past decade, but their proponents were always able to revive them and try to impose them again by hook or by crook.

An earlier Irish referendum, rejecting the Nice Treaty in 2001, was repeated a year later amid unprecedented foreign pressure; the yes vote narrowly prevailed. Then, following the rejection of the European Constitution by French and Dutch voters in 2005, E.U. leaders promptly devised a new document to replace it: the Reform Treaty, or the Treaty of Lisbon. Had it passed, the Treaty would have further eroded the national sovereignty of E.U. countries and increased the power of unelected Brussels apparatchiks.

Once hailed as a mechanism for overcoming deadly rivalries and increasing economic efficiencies, the European Union has morphed into a giant tool of social and political engineering. Its now defunct constitution pointedly excluded Christianity from the Preamble, replacing it with references to "equality" and "non-discrimination" and an obligation to combat "social exclusion" and respect "diversity."

The Lisbon Treaty inherited this ideological baggage *in toto*. It would have had primacy over the law of member-states, formally making Brussels superior to all national constitutions and legislative bodies. The political and legal straightjacket that it seeks to impose on some 490 million Europeans is gradually making opposition to the demographic change of their continent not only undesirable but illegal—to the benefit of unassimilable, overwhelmingly Muslim multitudes. The term *Eurabia*, introduced as an intellectual concept three decades ago by Ameriphobe French intellectuals, is on the verge of becoming real.

The most important aspect of the defeat of Lisbon is in the sphere of law. Under the European Arrest Warrant (EAW), which was to be implemented under the terms of the treaty, every citizen or visitor of a member-state would be subject to arrest and extradition at the behest of a judge in any other E.U. member-state, under 1 of 32 vaguely defined categories of "crime." This was a momentous development, and not 1 in 100 E.U. citizens—including the Irish—are fully aware of the implications.

The list of 32 offences includes criminal conspiracy, terrorism, human trafficking, child pornography, smuggling of drugs, weapons, and explosives, fraud and money laundering, murder, kidnapping, forgery, *etc.* It also includes "racism and xenophobia," as well as "computer crime" and "crimes under the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court." Local police would be obliged to arrest the indicted person and transfer him to the issuing judge's court for trial—regardless of their own country's judicial system or penal code. Once delivered, the arrestee would be judged according to the local laws, and the involvement of the ICC implies possible further extradition to non-E.U. countries.

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The EAW is already in force in Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. An initial hearing takes place before a judge within 48 hours to establish the identity of the arrested and whether the arrest warrant has been filled in correctly. Additional information may be requested from the state that issued the arrest warrant. The major difference between extradition and EAW procedures is that the "hearing" in the latter process does not consider the allegations against the defendant or examine evidence; it is merely meant to satisfy the court that no "legal bars to surrender" apply.

The European Arrest Warrant was one of the main topics at the recent Counter-Jihad Summit in Vienna (May 10-11), where the former Austrian Ambassador Edgar K. Selzer pointed out that the inclusion of "racism and xenophobia" brings "an emotion, a sentiment" into the category of major crimes, which is a legal and logical absurdity. As he explained, the EAW does not define "racism and xenophobia" as such; its drafters have relied on the European Commission's "framework decision on combating racism and xenophobia," which criminalizes "belief in race colour, descent, religion or belief, national or ethnic origin as a factor determining aversion to individuals." According to that decision, "racist and xenophobic behaviour must constitute an offence in all Member States and be punishable by effective, proportionate and dissuasive penalties." This applies to all "offences" committed within the territory of the European Union, or "for the benefit of a legal person established in a Member State."

The implications of the Lisbon Treaty are significant, not only for the future of civil liberties in the Western world but for me personally. I also gave a speech at the Counter-Jihad Summit in Vienna. In E.U.-speak, "racism and xenophobia" have long included the nebulous thought-crime of "Islamophobia"—and in the minds of the drafters of the framework decision, my speech could be construed as paradigmatically "Islamophobic" and reason for issuing an EAW.

I am not an E.U. citizen, but that is immaterial if the "offense" was committed in a member-state. Once the European Arrest Warrant is in force, a Muslim-friendly judge in, say, Leicester or Birmingham could issue a warrant for Trifkovic's arrest in Greece this summer for the "offense" committed by giving a speech in Austria last May, and the authorities in Thessaloniki or Athens would have to comply.

Furthermore, the speech was given at a gathering of 60 like-minded people, most of them E.U. citizens. This constitutes a criminal conspiracy, a separate offense among those 32 crimes listed, since the framework decision defines a "racist or xenophobic group" as "a structured organisation consisting of at least two persons established for a specific period." The speech was given "for the benefit of a legal person established in a Member State," which makes matters even worse.

Last but not least, that speech is available on the World Wide Web, in both German and English, which potentially falls under the separate and as yet undefined offense of "computer crime." A warrant has already been issued by British judges to the authorities in the Netherlands demanding the surrender of a Danish citizen in a case involving pornography.

Under the framework decision, anything that is said at a John Randolph Club meeting here in the United States may be deemed illegal and actionable under the EAW, if the offending speech or statement is posted on a website (such as *ChroniclesMagazine.org*) accessible within the European Union, or if some supposedly "racist and xenophobic" material found in these pages is distributed by mailing *Chronicles* to a subscriber or an institution in the European Union. This would amount to the "public dissemination or distribution of tracts, pictures or other material containing expressions of racism and xenophobia," potentially subjecting the author to arrest in any E.U. country on a warrant issued by a judge in any other E.U. country. Orwell was off by a quarter-century.

Far from grasping the danger to American interests inherent in such developments, the Bush administration is acting as an accomplice in this project. On his farewell tour of Europe, only four days before the Irish referendum, President Bush went out of his way to praise the European Union as a strong partner of the United States: "It's in our interest that the EU be strong, vibrant, and it's in our interests to work hard to have a partnership that solves problems."

European Commission President José Manuel Barroso—a Portuguese leftist—responded exuberantly:

> This is indeed a great achievement, and this achievement was possible thanks to the commitment of founding fathers of the European Union to a united Europe, but also thanks to support of the United States of America. . . . Thank you for all the support you have been giving to the integration and progress of democracy also in Europe.

The agreement between Mr. Bush, a "conservative," and Sr. Barroso, once a Maoist and now a socialist, is unsurprising. They both favor a propositional concept of "Europe" and "America," and the concomitant rejection of common heritage that includes common ancestry. This kind of partnership, which gives a new and unwelcome meaning to the phrase "beyond left and right," can be resisted only if we have a backlash against propositional statism, both in America and in Europe. The foundation for such a backlash is that, for the time being at least, nations still survive.

Various multiethnic states (imperial Russia, the Habsburg monarchy, the pre-World War II kingdom of Yugoslavia) have been labeled—often unfairly—as "prisons of nations." That designation would have applied even more aptly to the European Union, had the Irish not said "no." On Friday, June 13, Ireland provided a welcome proof that it is possible, and necessary, for a small nation to resist the forces of Euro-*Gleichschaltung*.

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MUSIC

Rockin' in the 50's

by Gregory McNamee

When the mode of music changes, Plato remarked, the walls of the city shake. When the mode of music changed back in the 1950's, the denizens of Plato's Pad—sorry, but there are so few opportunities to get in an allusion to *The Many Loves of Dobie Gillis* these days—and their peers saw more fingers than walls shaking: The music they were listening to, their elders admonished, was guaranteed to rot their minds as surely as soda pop would rot their teeth, and poodle skirts their morals.

Rewind a generation, and parents were shaking their fingers at their offspring, too, this time for listening to crooners such as Rudy Vallee and Bing Crosby. But the music of the 50's was different, for it had come bubbling and surging up from a source guaranteed to scandalize: the southern countryside, the one inhabited by poor blacks and poor whites whose musical traditions met and merged and, in some minds, miscegenated, producing jazz, country, blues, and now rock 'n' roll.

There is a wonderful scene in Taylor Hackford's 1987 film *Hail! Hail! Rock 'n' Roll* in which three battle-hardened veterans of the culture wars—Chuck Berry, Bo Diddley, and Little Richard—reminisce on how the music they helped introduce commanded the censorious instincts of millions of parents, for if the 45's that were in view in white suburban homes were by the likes of Pat Boone, the ones the kids kept under their bobby sox in their dresser drawers were by these decidedly dangerous, decidedly nonwhite types.

That knowledge roused the censorious instincts of Squaresville's cultural commentators as well. Wrote the muckraking journalists Jack Lait and Lee Mortimer in their best-seller *U.S.A. Confidential*, only bad behavior and social collapse could come from the "tom-toms and hot jive and ritualistic orgies of erotic dancing, weed-smoking, and mass mania, with African jungle background" that rock 'n' roll so clearly represented. Moreover, they added,

> Many music shops purvey dope; assignations are made in them. White girls are recruited for colored lovers. . . . We know that many platter-spinners are hop-heads. Many others are Reds, left-wingers, or hecklers of social convention.

Disk jockeys across the land, they concluded, were responsible for two things: getting young people to cross the color line, and enslaving the entire young generation to the Mafia.

The authors did not elaborate on how Italian-American organized crime figured into the equation, but they were right about a couple of things, for even a blind pig turns up an acorn from time to time. For a time, rock 'n' roll did indeed help break down ethnic barriers and racial divides, and musical venues in most cities, even in the deepest South, were integrated long before lunch counters were. (The barriers went back up in the early 70's, oddly enough, when FM radio and eight-minute-long songs became the norm. The Chambers Brothers notwithstanding, that was the stuff of white acts, not black ones, and unintended apartheid was the result: Motown on AM, the Mahavishnu Orchestra on FM.)

The work of rock 'n' roll against segregation was slow and not without cost. In 1957, Frankie Lymon, then 14 years old, danced with a white girl of the same age while singing "Why Do Fools Fall in Love?" on Alan Freed's television show *Rock 'n' Roll Dance Party*; afterward, he received death threats, and ABC dropped the program. For his part, Chuck Berry served prison time for a supposed violation of the Mann Act that, one prosecutor later admitted, was really punishment for causing white girls to swoon by means of the duck walk. Berry had taken great pains to make his music ethnically neutral; as he explained, "I stressed my diction so that it was harder and whiter. . . . It was my intention to hold both the black and white clientele by voicing the different songs in their customary tongues." His efforts paid off early, in 1955, when his song "Maybellene" simultaneously hit the number-one spot on the "race," pop, and country-and-western charts.

Yet rock 'n' roll music only helped along a process that had begun a generation before, with the modern quest for civil rights whose origins arguably lie in the 1930's. World War II accelerated its pace, not only by showing that all men bleed red but by mixing people from many walks of life and different parts of the country together, with musical as well as sociological effects. Indeed, although the roots of rock 'n' roll can be traced to the 1920's—listen to Henry Thomas's song "Bull Doze Blues," from 1928, and you will hear Canned Heat's "Goin' Up the Country" from 40 years later—its more immediate origins are from the late 1940's, when Leo Fender developed an affordable solid-body electric guitar to propel the sound of interracial rebellion into unsuspecting living rooms everywhere.

Rock 'n' roll took a while to build force, and it required the first wave of the baby-boom generation and that cohort's weekly allowances to become big business. In the summer of 1955, for instance, Bill Haley's "Rock Around the Clock" topped the charts, but every other song in the Top 10 was of the light-pop variety: Mitch Miller, Kay Starr, Tennessee Ernie Ford. Two years later, in the week I was born and the first boomers hit adolescence, Elvis Presley's "All Shook Up" reached number one, and even if the insipid Pat Boone took second place, the rest of the acts in the Top 10 were certifiable rockers. Debbie Reynold's "Tam-

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my" reigned briefly in the fall of that year, only to be rudely replaced by the likes of Buddy Holly and Jerry Lee Lewis, and from then on, even if middle-of-the-road pop enjoyed the occasional success, rock 'n' roll ruled.

But what sort of rock 'n' roll? Not the dangerous kind—not toward the end of the 50's. The satirist Tom Lehrer had it right when he lampooned "rock and roll and other forms of children's music," for if the chart-toppers were seditious, they were so in the same way that *Mad* was seditious—goofily. The walls of the city shook at "All Shook Up," to be sure. But then Elvis went into the Army, and, as John Lennon put it, rock died. Consider the tunes that hit the top of the pops in 1958, 1959, and 1960: "At the Hop," by Danny and The Juniors; "The Chipmunk Song" and "Witch Doctor," by David Seville; "Tequila," by The Champs; "The Battle of New Orleans," by Johnny Horton; "Alley Oop," by the Hollywood Argyles; "Itsy Bitsy Teenie Weenie Yellow Polka Dot Bikini," by Brian Hyland; "The Twist," by Chubby Checker; "Mr. Custer," by Larry Verne; "Teen Angel," by Mark Dinning. Apart from the last tune (a morbid classic), if such tunes had a Marxist element, it was of the Groucho and Harpo variety.

The carefree 50's, a decade far less gray than *The Organization Man* and *Come Back, Little Sheba* would have us believe, gave way to the careworn 60's, when the first boomers came of age and the walls really did begin to shake. Rockers began to take themselves seriously, and rock died again, to be reborn only with punk, which looked back to the 50's for inspiration. Fingers shook again, but civilization survived—as it did a generation earlier, and as it may even do once Paris Hilton, Lil Wayne, and Madonna are done with it today.

Indeed, contemplating the current scene, Sheb Wooley's "Purple People Eater," another number-one hit from 1958, looks positively Homeric, even if it does lead to hopheadedness and hullabaloo.

Gregory McNamee writes from Tucson, Arizona. He is the author, most recently, of Moveable Feasts *(Praeger, 2006).*

POLITICS

The Ultimate Insider

by John Willson

Who are the spear-carriers of government policies? This is a tale that puts pieces together over the course of a few decades. Neocons eat stories like this for breakfast.

Like most teachers, I have learned at least as much from my students as they have learned from me. An Argentinian graduate student at St. Louis University came to me for help on his M.A. thesis in 1970 or so, having heard that I supposedly knew something about contemporary American foreign policy. He was a communist, he said, whose brother was a Jesuit fighting the revolution (with machine guns) in northeastern Brazil. He wanted to prove that the burden of U.S. policy in Latin America was not economic (as all of us were taught in those days) but political.

The text he presented to me was *Prospect for America: The Rockefeller Panel Reports*, published by Doubleday in 1961. Surprisingly few Americans knew of its existence, despite the fact that its second chapter, "International Security: The Military Aspect," had been introduced by Nelson Rockefeller on Dave Garroway's *Today Show* in 1958. Garroway offered his audience free copies, with Rockefeller's permission, and the Rockefeller Brothers' Fund ponied up for the over 200,000 orders that came in.

Ernesto Ruiz, my student, considered *Prospect* the smoking gun of American politics: We were building an empire of democracy and gearing up to enforce it all over the world. Anaconda Copper, Standard Oil, United Fruit—it was all a smokescreen. The empire of democracy was the end, and everything else was means. The United States had been testing things in Latin America for decades. He said that Vietnam was a distraction. The goal was much bigger.

I had recently finished a doctoral dissertation on U.S. relations with Spain during World War II, reading thousands of State Department condemnations of the evil Franco, while the same progressives proclaimed that the (much worse) "neutral" Swedes had "given us an inward and spiritual grace, but not necessarily an outward and visible sign" of their purity. The liberal statists had endless tolerance for progressive Swedish hypocrisy, and no appreciation for the strategic subtlety of the "fascist" *caudillo*. Perhaps I was prepared for my commie student's argument.

The Rockefeller Panels were convened by Nelson in 1956 after he had split from Ike over his administration's reluctance to tax us into unlimited "foreign aid." Rockefeller would go on to beat fellow billionaire Averell Harriman in the New York governor's race and turn over the panels to his brother David, but Nelson had already purchased the best Americans money could buy. Henry Kissinger chaired the panels but stepped aside to write his own *Realpolitik* book once the Dean Rusks and Maxwell Taylors and Adolf Berles and Chuck Percys turned them into a Wilsonian dreamworld. The panelists became a Who's Who of JFK and LBJ empire builders; look for the guys and gals who gave us Vietnam, and they are there.

Prospect for America does not represent a conspiracy. On the contrary, it was the most public, up-front, in-your-face statement of American empire since Albert Beveridge's "March of the Flag" speech in 1898. It stands directly in the line of Woodrow Wilson, Franklin Roosevelt, and Harry Truman (whose NSC-68 summed it all up but was still "top secret" when the Rockefeller Panels met). It prefigured Kennedy's "pay any price" and Johnson's Great Society in Southeast Asia, and surfaced again in Clinton's bombs over the Balkans and in the Bush Doctrine of 2002.

Furthermore, it was "bipartisan." One recalls here M. Stanton Evans' quip that the "stupid party" and the "evil party" get together to do something really stupid and evil, which is called "bipartisanship." *Prospect* envisioned a world of peacefully coop-

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erating states, tied together by what we now call "globalization" and enforced by a strong U.S.-dominated series of shifting alliances. It called for political, economic, social, educational, and military initiatives powered by the "Democratic Idea." The glue was the struggle against the Soviet Union; the goal was "the future of America and the freedom of the world." It is a short leap forward to the Bush Doctrine of preemptive war and a short leap backward to Beveridge's call for us to be "the propagandists and not the misers of liberty."

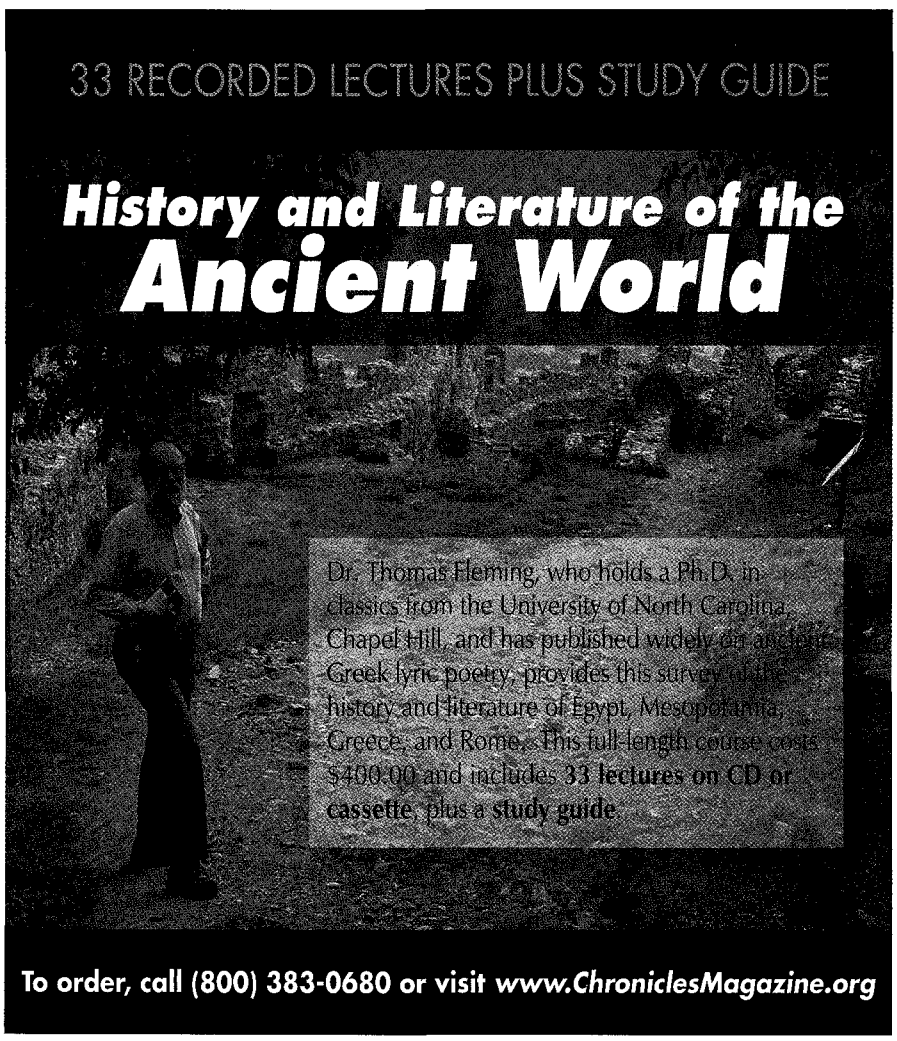
It is one thing to proclaim and another thing to act, although sometimes a "planning process" results in self-fulfilling prophesies. Dean Rusk, David Sarnoff, Townsend Hoopes, Harlan Cleveland, Maxwell Taylor, Roger Hilsman, Walt W. Rostow, McGeorge Bundy, and dozens of others would move into policy positions in the (very educable) John Kennedy and (very aggressive) Lyndon Johnson administrations. An interesting character, unknown to most of us, who tied much of this together, was the Ultimate Insider, Roswell Gilpatric.

"Ros," as he was known, was a Democrat who frequented the Rockefeller and later the Kennedy social circles, and became the intimate of Robert S. McNamara. "Ros and I," Big Mac often wrote, believe *this about this* and *that about that*. As undersecretary of defense, a member of the National Security Council and its "ExCom," Ros was in on everything from 1961 to 1964. He was a Yalie (Phi Beta Kappa, 1928; law, 1931) and quickly became a partner in the Cravath firm in Manhattan. Cravath has provided us with many "public servants" thanks to its generous policy of encouraging partners to take time off to help presidents do their duty; "It was felt that government experience would be helpful." Ros was "a rainmaker whose extensive business contacts brought business to the firm." He was handsome, charming, and most of the time he kept out of sight.

He liked Nelson Rockefeller, as most people apparently did, and quietly helped him get elected as New York governor (firms such as Cravath have to cover their bases). He moved from the Rockefeller Security Panel to the Department of Defense seamlessly, having also cultivated the Kennedys a few years earlier. Ros was a loyal guy, most of the time. He helped take the fall for the Bay of Pigs fiasco, took on the job of giving the speech that (had anybody been listening) blew Kennedy's cover on the "missile gap" lies of the 1960 campaign, was in the middle of the Mongoose operation that never got Castro, and apparently was one of the very few who knew that the Vietnamese generals were going to assassinate Diem.

This shameful episode is one we know something about, despite the almost total lack of access to the Kennedy papers at Harvard (which, as long as even one Kennedy draws a public breath, will be closed to public scrutiny). JFK appointed Ros to organize an Interdepartmental Task Force (a euphemism for ignoring and overriding the legally constituted responsibilities of the State and Defense Departments, the CIA, USIA, and military intelligence) to "appraise" and "recommend" actions for the already (by 1961) out-of-control mess in Southeast Asia. Ros's group came up with "A Program of Action to Prevent Communist Domination of South Vietnam" in just over two weeks. It recommended, among other things, the introduction of U.S. ground troops. But a sticking point was both the image and the recalcitrant reality of South Vietnam's leader: Diem had to be, or at least had to seem to be, a democrat—or in Kennedy terms, a reformer. Washington's action had to be predicated upon the aims of *Prospect for America* in Southeast Asia.

Ros's report had two problems to address that couldn't be discussed publicly: How to cover unilateral American aggression under the Gene-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va Accords, and how to deal with Diem if he didn't want to become a democrat. The former Ros dismissed with a little bit of sophistry: Since the communists ignored Geneva Accord inhibitions, so then could we. It wouldn't be hard to fool the American people about such morally relative matters. Just do a covert war, and explain it later. The latter Ros was more ambivalent about, but his report gave the clear implication that if Diem continued to be a problem, then eliminate the problem.

Secretary of State Dean Rusk gave voice to this approach in the fall of 1961 when he recommended that if we were to introduce ground troops it would be best simply to take over the machinery of government in the South. Rusk was no stranger to such thinking: In 1949-50, as a functionary in Dean Acheson's State Department, he had favored promoting a coup—even an assassination—against Chiang Kai-shek's KMT regime in the waning months of the Chinese civil war.

Ros did not say, "Let's kill Diem and take over the government of South Vietnam so we can effectively prevent communist domination of Southeast Asia." He did produce a report that triggered a series of other reports—a memorandum from McGeorge Bundy, a very public dispatching of Vice President LBJ to Vietnam, a less publicized but crucial "fact-finding mission" to Vietnam by Gen. Maxwell Taylor and Walt W. Rostow—which represent *Prospect for America* in action. Ros was probably not the idea-man for all this. He was a sycophant and spear-carrier. But he was in the middle of a gang that took our empire to a new level.

Ros had to whisper convincing things in a lot of ears to be in the middle of so much. He got too close to Kennedy to last long under LBJ, but was given good exit cover as chairman of a study on nuclear proliferation.

If one studies the self-serving memoirs and histories of his era, Ros emerges as the Ultimate Insider. He knew everybody. He evaded all scandals (including his own obvious connection between General Dynamics and very shaky defense contracts). It is hard to determine what he believed, except that his loyal support of empire was apparently tempered by a certain ambivalence. He is supposed to have said in the midst of the Cuban Missile Crisis, "Essentially, Mr. President, this is a choice between limited action and unlimited action; and most of us think that it's better to start with limited action." His Maryland farm was a kind of Kennedy compound south; his movement around Wall Street and the farm and Washington Got Things Done.

Ros also rivaled his presidential mentor: Lots of women. Unlike JFK, he had four wives, the third of whom divorced him because of his affair with—Jacqueline Kennedy. "She dumped me for Onassis," he said. Such is the fate of the Ultimate Insider, and such is the course of empire. Ever heard of him? The neocons have.

John Willson is professor emeritus of history at Hillsdale College.

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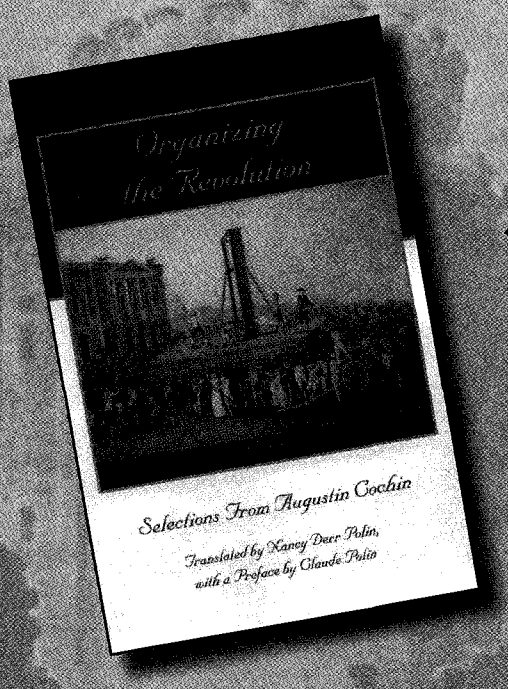
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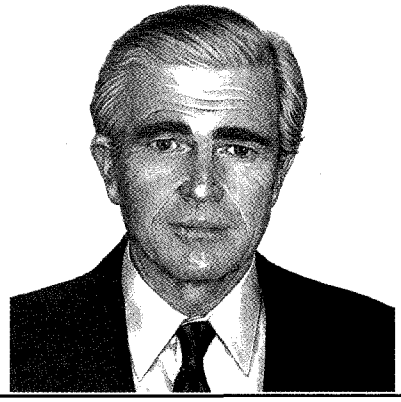
by George McCartney

Good Night, Shyamalan



The Happening
Produced and distributed by Twentieth Century-Fox and UTV Motion Pictures
Written and directed by M. Night Shyamalan

The star of M. Night Shyamalan's latest film, *The Happening*, demonstrates once more how unaccountably loathe producers are to give their boom microphones top billing.

During the showing I attended last night, the boom mike kept playfully piercing the top edge of the screen. After ten minutes, I left the auditorium to talk to the theater manager. "We tried lowering the screen's top mask line," she explained, "but it cut off most of the actors' heads." I returned to my seat resigned to put up with this assault on my always willing suspension of disbelief. Still, I took heart, reasoning that the nuisance would surely disappear as the film went on. Directors constantly review their films as they shoot them to correct just such problems. But no. The microphone or, to be more accurate, microphones, kept bouncing into one scene after another. One was muffled in furry fabric for outdoor recording. Another had turned red perhaps from embarrassment. If the scene had dialog, a boom mike appeared. This would have been intolerable but for one thing. Mr. Bouncing Mike was giving the liveliest performance in the film. Indeed, I would later discover that BM had become a celebrity on the internet. Hundreds, perhaps thousands, of people were posting notices about its performance. One observer recorded that, in the theater he had attended, rowdy adolescents took to calling out, "Where's the mike?" whenever it *didn't* drop into a scene.

I don't want to make this a star-is-born column. Suffice it to say that Shyamalan's carelessness with his boom suggests he harbors a self-destructive arrogance as well-developed as that possessed by any other swell in his industry.

With all of Shyamalan's films, one thing stands true: Each has been more disappointing than the one before. I reviewed *The Sixth Sense* nine years ago with great enthusiasm. It further confirmed my opinion that films are worth writing about, that at their best they can afford the kind of pleasure and provocation that other arts do, and I looked forward to seeing him fulfill his early promise. He never has. I did not write about his most recent works, *The Village* and *The Lady in the Water*, on principle. It's unsporting to shoot caged foxes. So why am I taking aim at *The Happening*? I suppose out of an odd combination of wonder and regret. I cannot understand how so talented a young man can have persisted in such folly. And, unless by some marketing miracle or public craze *The Happening* makes money, Shyamalan will not likely be able to raise the capital to make another film.

From the first, Shyamalan has been enamored of the Big Idea, an infatuation fatal to narrative art. In *The Happening*, the Big Idea is that Mother Nature has become fed up with mankind—a notion that has some provenance, I believe. Anyway, the rhododendrons, aspidistras, and arborvitae have conspired to exhale toxins into the air that invade human neurotransmitters and block whatever it is that keeps us from sinking knitting needles into our necks or walking off girders 20 stories above Manhattan. You would be amazed at how the bodies pile up when this whatever-it-is is blocked. When grade-school science teacher Elliot Moore (Mark Wahlberg) and his buddy, Julian (John Leguizamo), discover what's happening on the streets outside their classrooms, they grab their families and head west, assuming Manhattan is under a terrorist attack. But everywhere they go, they come upon people killing themselves. At last, Elliot finds a farm owned by a paranoid recluse (a wonderfully over-the-top Betty Buckley). Having no other recourse, Elliot and his wife, Alma (Zooey Deschanel working her terrified baby blues overtime), hunker down, despite Ms. Buckley's harangues on the poisoned state of modern America.

Nothing is wrong with this premise, but Shyamalan handles its elaboration with a laughable disregard for human plausibility and artistic finesse, especially with Mr. BM butting in every few minutes. While people all around them are cutting their throats and throwing themselves under tractors, Elliot and Alma keep arguing over whether they are really committed to each other. She feels compelled to tell him she went out for dessert with a coworker, and he confesses to making goo-goo eyes at a woman in the pharmacy. I half expected they would stop to confer with a marriage counselor on their mad dash just ahead of those bad-breath flowers across rural Pennsylvania.

Shyamalan cavalierly abandons his allegory whenever he feels it's time to thump one of his thematic points. Here we are to understand that lack of commitment is toxic to marriages. OK, I'll buy this, but jeepers, let's first get out of the way of that ill wind blowing from the East!

Shyamalan, too, needs to step aside from the mighty draft of his hubris and decide whether he wants to tell stories or give sermons. They are not the same thing. ◁

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by Chilton Williamson, Jr.

"¡Mi Casa es su Casa!"

Héctor woke on New Year's morning with a reverberating headache that made his wife's remonstrations (in the pinch, AveMaría had been appointed an emergency designated driver to take the party home safely the night before) the more painful to bear. He felt thoroughly ashamed of himself—first for getting drunk, and second for . . . the other thing.

Héctor could not decide whether his plan had amounted to a success. Had Jacinta Ruiz really got the message he'd intended to send her last evening? Or had she been hoping to appeal to his jealous instincts in the arms of the dashing Rodolfo? Perhaps even—the thought penetrated like a manzanita thorn—she had never felt anything for him, and, falling victim to his own vanity, he'd simply imagined it all and made a fool of himself for nothing. He had no idea where to begin sorting the thing out, and a hangover was no aid in this endeavor.

In another part of the house, someone was practicing vocal scales—Contracepción beginning her warm-up for rehearsal again. (Hadn't the girl had all New Year's Eve to practice while she babysat Dubya?) Maybe the Juárezes would flee to Las Cruces for the rest of the day, in order to take advantage of the holiday sales.

Héctor's New Year's resolution had been to return home by the first of February. How, he asked himself, could his family be in greater danger in Belen than on the Juárez Ranch, directly athwart the path of countless jihadists swarming across the border each night? (Even more to the point, who was he—Héctor Villa, a collateral descendent of The Centaur—to be intimidated by a couple of immigrant Islamists hiding out like rats in a decaying tenement house?) As a corollary to this resolution, Héctor had determined on making a bold reconnaissance of Belen for the purpose of seeing for himself what the strategic situation there really was.

Upon learning that her husband intended a visit home, AveMaría announced that she and the family were coming, too—a proposition Héctor promptly vetoed as too dangerous. Until he could ascertain the threat level posed by Abdul Kahn and his associates, he insisted, his wife and children would stay put on the Juárez Ranch—no *if*s, *and*s, or *but*s about it. This intransigency sent Dubya, who'd had his heart set on being reunited with his collection of 25 or 30 stuffed lions, into a tantrum and put AveMaría in a pained sulk. Only Contracepción, in her preoccupation with her laptop and her singing career, acted indifferent to the paternal decision. Héctor, who'd fully expected Jesús "Eddie" would wish to join him on the trip, was greatly relieved when his friend declared himself content to stick to his post at the border, "defending the Rio Abajo here on the front line," as he put it. Jesús, though often useful in an emergency, was rather too conspicuous, Héctor felt, for a delicate reconnaissance mission such as this one, as likely as not to turn up in a trench coat, dark glasses, and a cowboy hat. Furthermore, his proclivity for the bottle made him a potential liability around the Taberna Aztlán and other local watering holes, where (as an earlier generation of embattled Americans used to say) "Loose lips sink ships."

Like a fighter pilot departing on a volunteer mission, Héctor accepted the tearful farewells of his womenfolk and left the Juárez Ranch on the Ides of January in AveMaría's Subaru, which, in addition to getting twice as many miles to the gallon as his van did, had the added advantage of failing to identify its owner in large red letters along the side panels.

The day was cool, cloudless, and windless, the pale winter sky a mild blue sealant annealing the ragged circular horizon with the folded, scorified, tawny-pink desert dotted with sotol, yucca, and creosote bush. To save miles and avoid Las Cruces, Héctor took the slower cutoff from Deming northeast to Rincón on the Rio Grande, south of Truth or Consequences. It felt wonderful, after so many weeks of constraint, to be away from the ranch, and even (he had to admit) from his family. Ever since he'd found himself with both the time and the opportunity to see to it that an oil change was performed every 3,000 miles, the Subaru ran beautifully, and Héctor was feeling surprisingly lighthearted as he drove north on I-25 at 80 mph. North of Elephant Butte, the valley of the Rio opened out on both sides of the highway, and then it really was as if he could see forever, from the low-lying, rather sinister Black Range to the west, across the Jornada del Muerto and the San Andres Mountains to the White Mountains, their high peaks gleaming with snow, far away in the east. Though no outdoorsman, Héctor found that this vast wide-open country, a land of expansive valleys transected by mountain ranges and punctured by solitary bergs like mangled iron, appealed to and soothed his spirit. And why should it not, it occurred to him suddenly—it was all a part of the northerly extension of Old Mexico!

His spirits fell after he took the first exit off the interstate and followed South Main Street into Belen. Héctor had never before thought of the town as looking seedy, yet that was how it struck him this shining, perfect afternoon. The outlying houses were small, not much more than ado-

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be shacks, many of them in a state of partial collapse and surrounded by litter and junked cars. The scene overall was familiar in a way that was strangely disturbing. He puzzled briefly and came up with the answer. The place reminded him of the Third World—in fact, of TV footage he'd seen of those dusty, underdeveloped Iraqi towns in the desert away from Baghdad! All that was required to complete the effect, Héctor thought, was a few gowned and turbaned figures walking about. When he reached the downtown district and saw what looked like a couple of swamis walking out of Geraldo's Mexican-Chinese Café as he sat waiting at a stoplight, Héctor realized that Jesús "Eddie's" gloomy report the previous month had been only too accurate. Belen was being taken over by the Enemy.

In his flush days, Héctor would have put up at the Holiday Inn Express at 2111 Camino del Llano; today, he checked in at the Super 8 at 428 South Main. He ate a late lunch at TJ's Mexican Restaurant—a favorite of his and Jesús "Eddie's"; also a place one would not expect to be patronized by Moors—and afterward stopped off at Dominguín's Sporting Goods, where he purchased two boxes of .44 Magnum shells for the handgun he'd transferred that morning from the van to the Subaru. Héctor toyed with the idea of stopping by the Taberna Aztlán for a shot or two of liquid courage, but in the end concluded he really didn't need it—yet. So far, no one had appeared even to recognize, let alone challenge, him. And he would begin a serious reconnoiter of the town only after dark, when the Enemy could be expected to show his face. For now, he would check on his own house to assure himself that all was well and that the pipes hadn't burst, or the furnace exploded, in his absence.

To Héctor's astonishment, a vehicle sat on the concrete apron outside the garage—an ancient Chevrolet Suburban painted in as many colors as Joseph's coat and quite obviously pieced together from parts selected from a smorgasbord of junkyards in two countries.

The white fence surrounding the house, stained a rusty pink from the blowing winter dust, had pickets missing here and there, leaving gaps through which Héctor caught a glimpse of patchy dead grass and a scattering of children's toys across it. The shades and blinds were down behind all the windows, save for the one fronting the master bedroom from which the glass had been partly knocked out and a Zapotec blanket hung behind the frame. Héctor's first thought was that, in his somewhat abstracted state of mind, he had come to the wrong house. But it was not so. The number above the front door was his, and so was the name on the mailbox resting atop the red-white-and-blue post. This house belonged to him, and somebody had appropriated it since the Villas' temporary removal to Rancho Juárez two months before.

Héctor parked against the opposite curb, got out of the car, and started across the street. When he was halfway to the other side, he turned, walked back to the Subaru, and took the .44 from under the driver's seat. He held the gun in his hand for a few seconds, then put it back under the seat and retraced his steps empty-handed. This time, Héctor strode through the once-intact gate that hung now on one hinge and up the walk to the front door. He lifted the knocker and with it struck three ringing blows. Finally he took a step back from the door and waited. He was about to strike again when the door opened slowly inward against a short stout mestizo wearing his hair combed forward over the upper half of his face, too-tight blue jeans, and a black muscle shirt that showed off the elaborate tattoos along his thick arms.

"*¿Quién es?*" he demanded in a truculent voice.

Héctor was too astounded to resent this. "*¿Quién ES?*" he replied. His tone conveyed no retort but a natural, uncomplicated desire to have the answer.

"I am Zapata—Hipólito Zapata. Who wishes to know?"

"My name is Héctor Villa. I am the

owner of this house. And just what is your reason for being here?"

A woman appeared behind Señor Zapata, as short as he but much fatter. As Héctor's eyes adjusted to the semi-darkness beyond, he became aware of the whites of what seemed dozens of pairs of eyes, all of them staring at him.

At the name of Villa, Zapata's suspicious, haughty face—the face of a proud householder—expanded in a wide, toothy expression of welcoming delight.

"¡Ah, Señor Villa! *¡Buenas tardes!, ¿cómo está?* It is so good to meet you! Josefa, just look! It is 'Pancho' Villa, of whom we have heard so much!" Zapata stepped back and held the door wider, describing a sweeping downward motion with his arm. "*¡Señor—pase, pase por favor! ¡Mi casa es su casa!*"

Like a man in a dream, Héctor complied. Hipólito Zapata shook both his hands together, and Josefa, too, stepped forward and gave him her small, limp, fat one. Behind her the eyes had withdrawn among piles and heaps of strewn debris, random as salients in a natural landscape. The house smelled of burnt lard and maize, and the kitchen was full of smoke. Héctor could not believe his eyes. He didn't recognize his own home.

"I do not understand," he told Zapata in his strongest, no-beating-about-the-bush voice. "Please explain. How it is you know about me. And what you are doing in my home."

Zapata shut the door firmly and locked it. Then he grandly gestured Héctor toward what remained of Ave-

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María's favorite sofa.

"*¡Josefa—dos cervezas aquí, y pronto!*"

He seated himself beside his guest on the sofa, sat back, and folded his arms comfortably over his stomach.

"*Compadre*—is it possible you have not been told? That you do not know who is Hipólito Zapata? That I do not believe!"

"Know you? Of course, I don't know you! Why in the name of the Devil should I?"

"But I am the second cousin of Eufemio Villa, three times removed! You have been too long away from your own people, *hermano*, a real *jefe* living up there in Washington, D.C.—in the *Casa Blanca*, so I am told!"

"I haven't been living in Washington. I've been in New Mexico, on the border—" Héctor corrected, before he caught himself. Loose lips sink ships, including his own little boat.

Zapata looked bewildered.

"That Eufemio, he told me you got yourself elected something-or-other and moved the family to Washington. He said, 'There's plenty room in Pancho's house for you to live while you're looking for work in Albuquerque. He won't mind—a *jefe* like him living like Porfirio Díaz in the *Casa Blanca* with Jorge Bush.' That's when he gave me the key, so I wouldn't have to break in like a *ladrón*—an *escalador*!"

Josefa came with two bottles of beer and a bowl of fried pork skins, and went away again. From every corner of the house, the eyes were reappearing, advancing like those of feral creatures emerging from the jungle shadows. It seemed to Héctor the Zapatas must have at least a dozen children, or even more.

"*¡Salud, primo!*" Hipólito raised his bottle for a toast. "*No se inquiete*: We'll be out of here in a month—two, at the most—when I find the job I am looking for in Albuquerque. *Comprende*—more than the minimum wage, benefits, a month's vacation paid. This is El Norte, *hermano*! Hipólito Zapata knows how to make the most of it."

An object buried deep in Héctor's pocket started to vibrate suddenly like a rattlesnake's tail. He rolled sideways to free the pocket and drew his cellphone out.

"*¡Oiga! ¡Oiga!¡ ¿HÉCTOR?*"

"*!Si, si—diga!*"

It was AveMaría, sounding hysterical.

"*¡Oiga!*"

"Yes, yes, I'm here, *¡diga!* What is it, AveMaría?"

"Contracepción!"

"Well, what about her?"

"She's run off to Vegas with some singer! While Dubya and I were away at the Wal-Mart in Deming! She left a note on the kitchen table. Beatriz found it and showed it to me when I got home! We thought she'd been kidnapped for ransom, at first!"

Five minutes later Héctor closed up the phone and returned it to his pocket. Then he stood from the sofa with great dignity.

"If you and your family are not gone from my house in a week," he told Hipólito Zapata, "I'm calling the Homeland Security Department to carry you out. *¿Comprende, amigo? ¡Escúcheme bien!*" ©

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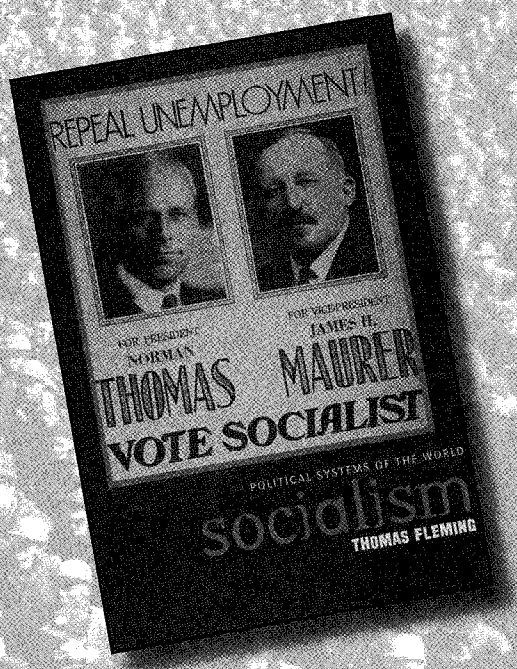

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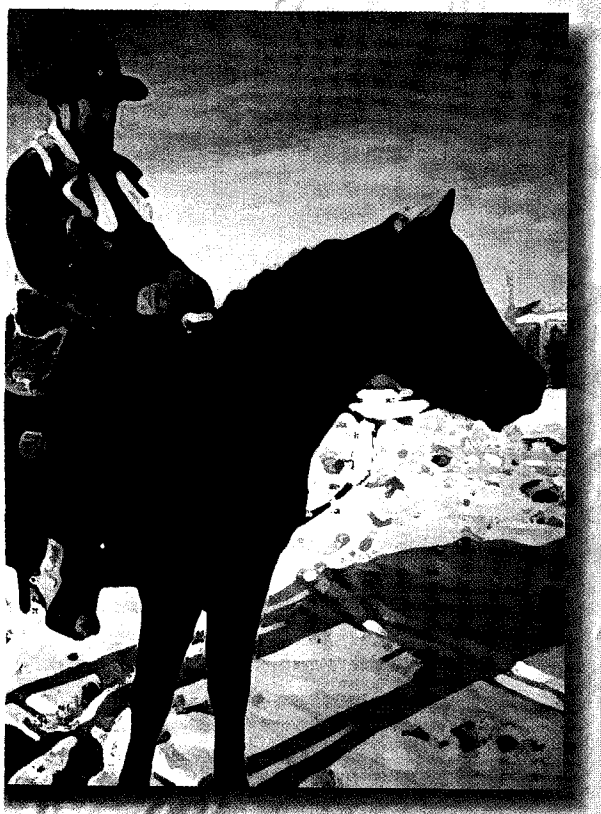

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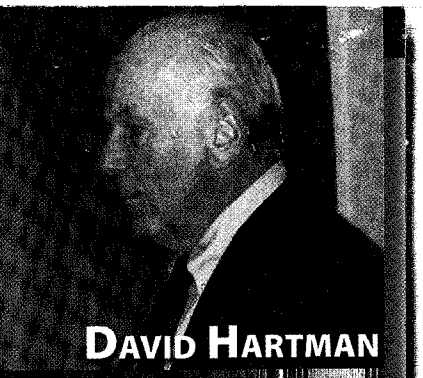
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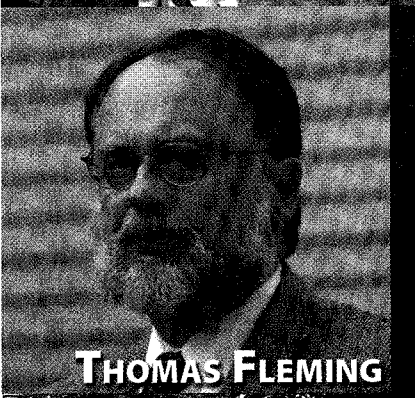
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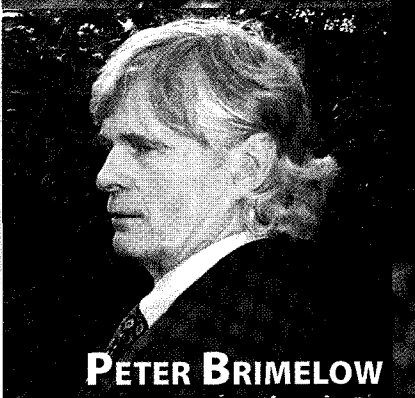
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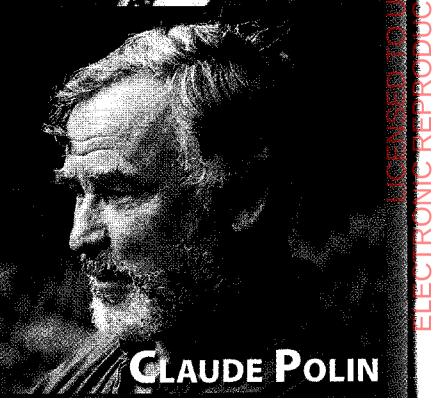
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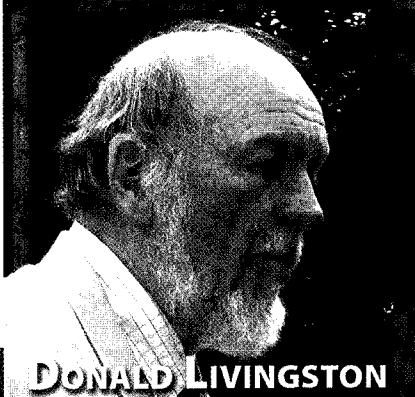
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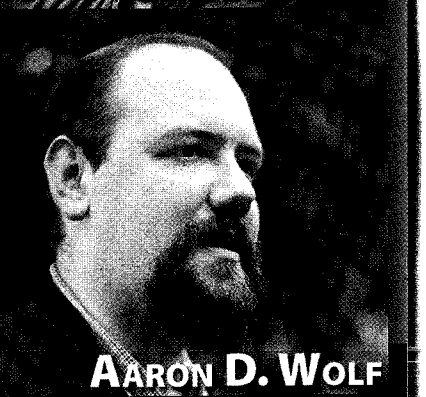
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